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Cake
CRAFT & DECORATION

Christmas Cakes

Snowmen cakes

Christmas flowers to make

Glitzy baubles cake

Sugar place settings

Fairy log

Last minute Christmas cake

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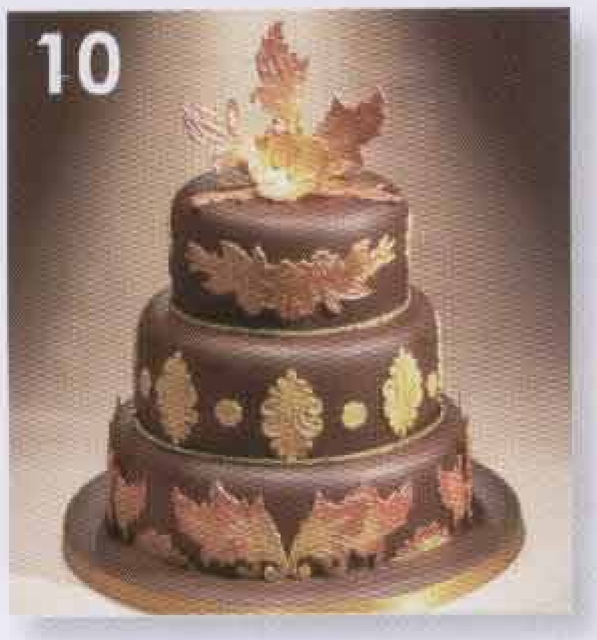
Issue 121

Full projects with step-by-step instructions

ingredients



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December

I'm delighted to add to your build up to Christmas with a festive array of projects to help you celebrate the coming holiday period. This month you will spot that we are concentrating on less complex designs as I know that, like me, most of you will have plenty of Christmas preparation lined up already! I am sure that you will agree that our ideas capture that special magic only this time of year brings to all children (whether 1 year old or 101 years old).

Cake has been delighted to bring a bit of cheer and challenge to you every month this year, and I trust that this edition will add that final bit of fun to make your Christmastime just that little bit more special.

Before I put the magazine to bed for 2008, in anticipation of waking up to find what surprises Santa has left for our pages in 2009, can I thank our wonderful readership for all your support, comments & contributions. I look forward to editing for you all again next year, but in the meantime, for you and your families, please have a merry and magical Christmas.

Julie

Julie Askew, Editor

16

30

70

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Cake
DIFFICULTY
RATING

Mr & Mrs Snowman

Karen Davies

This cute snowman couple look cosy and warm in their winter woollies. Moulds have been used for the heads and simple shapes for the bodies, arms and feet have been added. This is an easy cake for beginners to have a go at and a quick cake for the more experienced cake decorator.

YOU WILL NEED

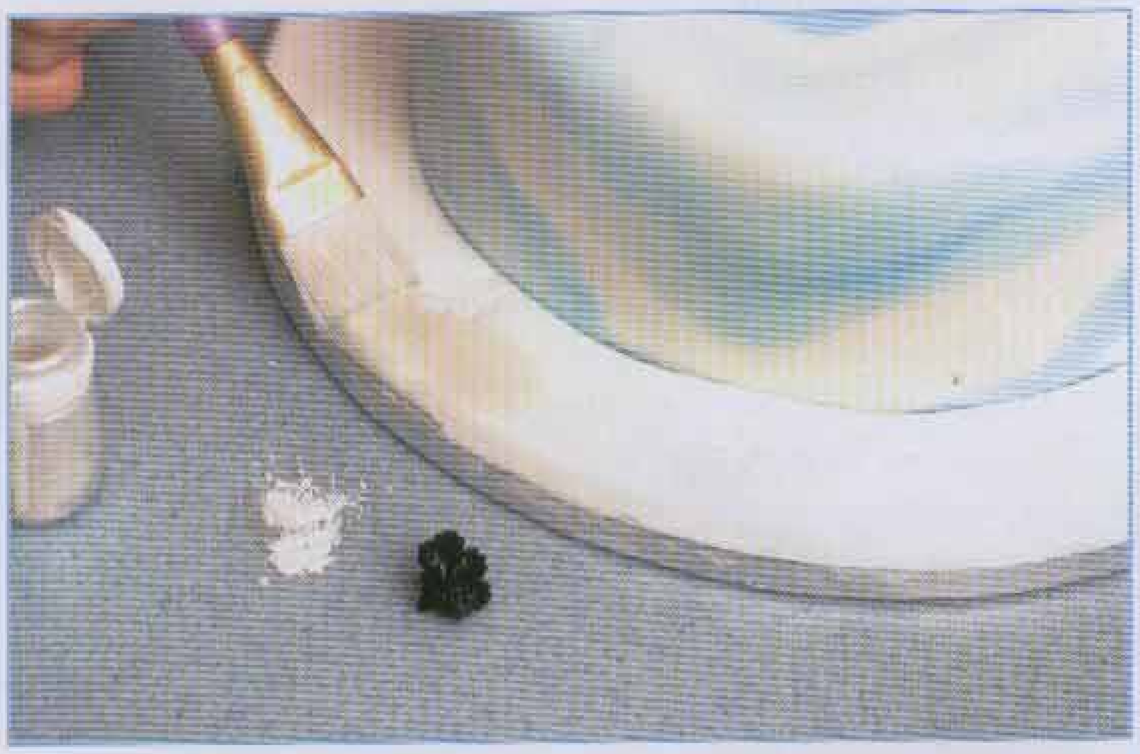
- fruit cake marzipaned 20cm (8in)
- cake drum 30.5cm (12in)
- sugarpaste 1.2kg (2lb 12oz)
- mexican paste 110g (4oz)
- royal icing
- magic sparkles white 3 pots
- vodka or gin
- edible glue
- isopropyl alcohol
- white fat
- paste colour gentian (SK)
- paste colours black, paprika (Sugarflair)
- powder colours snowflake lustre (SK)
- powder colours rose, teal, lilac, black, white (Sugar City)
- snowman head moulds 1 & 2 (Karen Davies)
- large snowflake cutter (Patchwork Cutters)
- small snowflake cutter from snowflake and star set (Patchwork Cutters)
- dresden tool (PME)
- crimper 1cm (1/2in) double closed curve serrated (PME)
- strip cutter size 1 (JEM)
- button stick (Holly Products)
- piping nozzle number 2
- paintbrushes numbers 1 & 4, flat dusting brushes (various sizes)
- pastry brush
- pestle & mortar (optional)
- smoother
- kitchen paper

PREPARATION

Place cake on board. Colour 400g (14oz) of sugarpaste with the gentian paste colour.

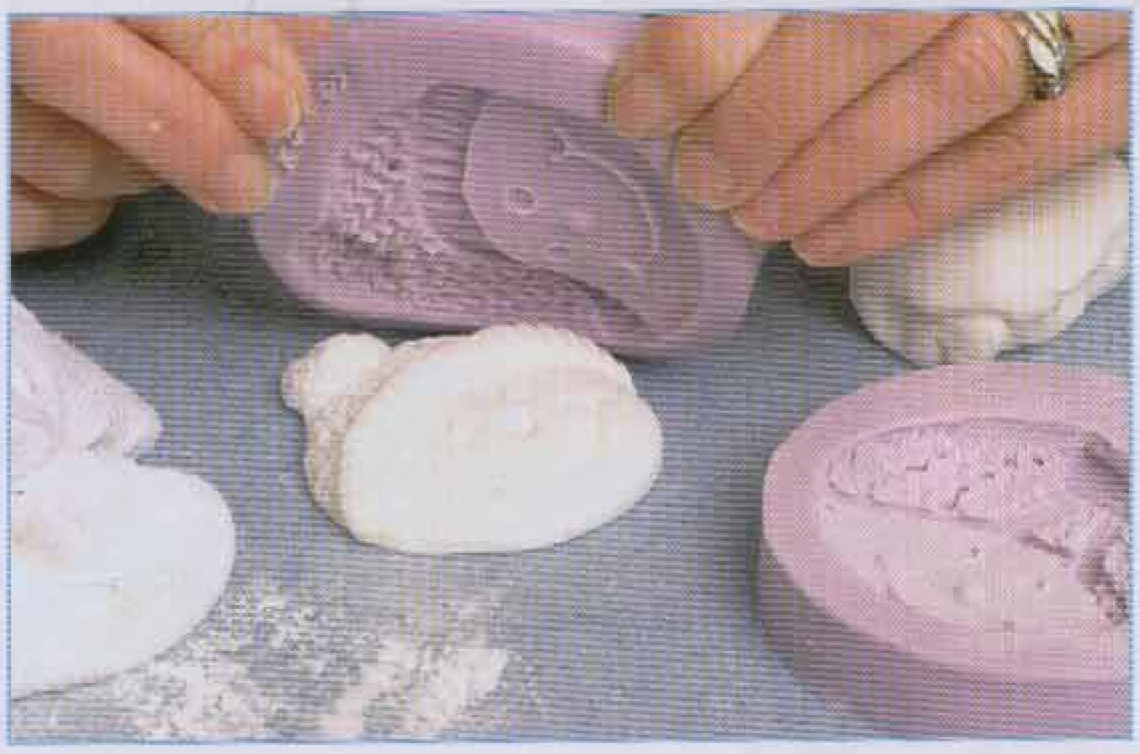
Knead together 60g (2oz) each of sugarpaste and mexican paste for modelling paste.

1 Shape the gentian sugarpaste and 425g (15oz) of white sugarpaste into two sausage shapes. Roll the two pieces together into one long piece and fold in half. Repeat approximately 7-10 times. Brush cake with alcohol. Roll out sugarpaste and cover the cake, smooth and trim the sugarpaste.

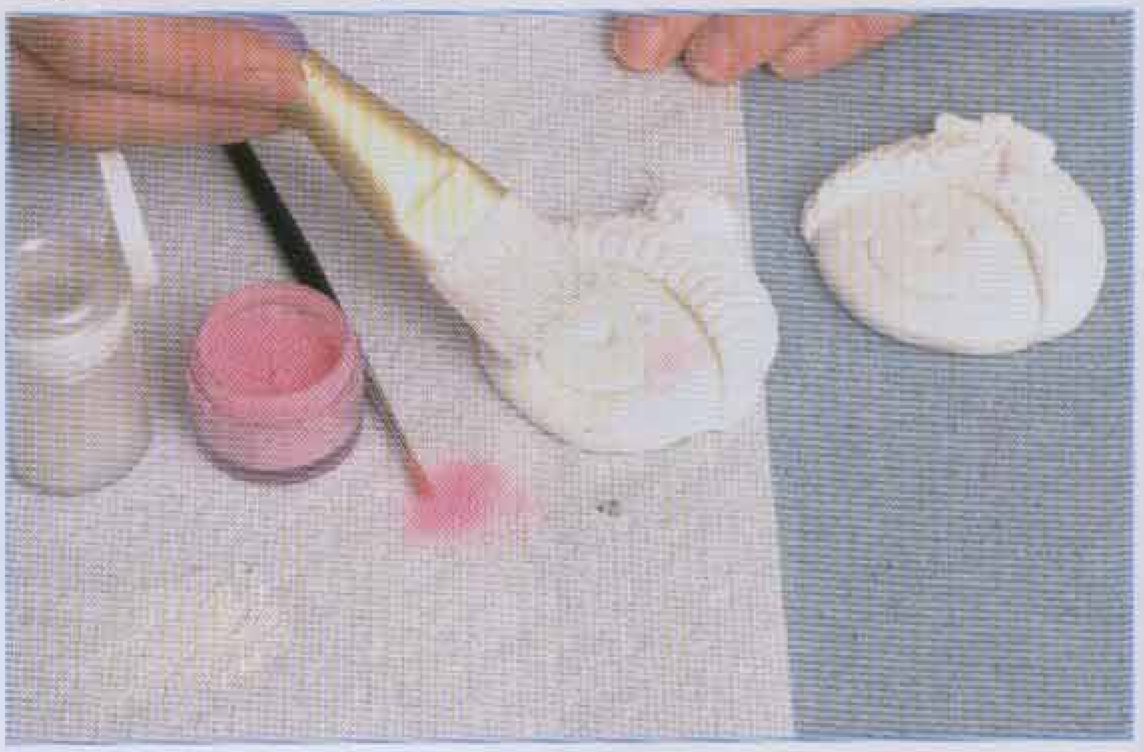


2 Brush the cake board with glue or alcohol and cover with white sugarpaste. Emboss with the small snowflake cutter. Use a large flat dusting brush and cover well with snowflake lustre.

3 Grease the work surface and the large snowflake cutter with white vegetable fat. Roll out mexican paste thinly without lifting and turning the paste. Cut out the snowflake by pressing firmly. Remove the excess paste. Dust the snowflake with the lustre dust and place on a sponge pad to dry. You will need eight snowflakes.



4 Dust the snowman head moulds with cornflour, turn over and tap out excess. Roll a smooth ball of modelling paste 40g ($1^1/_2$oz), flatten slightly and press into a head mould. Turn over and release. Repeat with the other mould.



5 Rub pink powder colour onto a piece of kitchen paper then dust cheeks. Brush faces with snowflake lustre.

6 Mix isopropyl alcohol with black powder colour, paint eyes (and eyelashes if you want to on the girl). Mix the white powder with the alcohol and paint a tiny white highlight into each eye.

7 Colour a small piece of modelling paste with paprika and shape a tiny carrot for each nose. Attach with glue.

8 Place the heads on kitchen paper. Rub the colours into the paper so there is no loose powder, then colour the hats.

9 Take 200g (7oz) of sugarpaste and divide for bodies. Shape into a teardrop shape and flatten slightly.

10 Attach bodies and heads to the cake with edible glue.

11 Divide 30g (1oz) of sugarpaste into 4 pieces and shape the arms, make them wide at the wrist and narrow at the shoulder. Mark a crease at the elbow with a dresden tool. Attach to the cake and cross the arms over. Brush snowflake lustre over the bodies and arms.

CakeTip

For a knitted pattern mark vertical lines with a dresden tool (on flat paste a strip cutter can be used), then small indents with the end of the tool in one direction between two lines, then turn the tool and mark between the next two lines at the opposite angle. Repeat.

12 Take small balls of sugarpaste and shape 4 teardrop shapes for mittens. Flatten slightly, cut out a triangle to make a thumb, then crimp or mark a knitted pattern with the dresden tool (see tip). Dust mittens to match the hats.

13 Attach the mittens to the arms then add a small trim of sugarpaste over the join.

TECHNIQUE

14 Roll out modelling paste, mark with the strip cutter then cut two scarf sections with six strips in each piece 4-5cm ($1^1/_2$in-2in) long and mark the knitted pattern. Brush with dust colour to match the hat. Gather each at one end and join together. Cut a smaller piece for the knot, mark pattern, colour then gather at two opposite sides and attach over two longer pieces. Repeat the scarf for the girl using the crimper.

15 Attach the scarves to snowmen. Colour 14g ($^1/_2$oz) of modelling paste black. Roll 6 small balls and attach to the snowmen's bodies. Press the button stick into each.

16 Roll 4 balls of sugarpaste, flatten a little and attach to the snowmen for legs. Divide remaining black modelling paste into 4 pieces. Shape each into an oval shape, flatten slightly and mark a heel with the dresden tool. Attach to the legs.

17 Turn the snowflakes over and use a number 2 nozzle, pipe straight lines along 5 of the six straight 'legs'. Repeat.

18 Use a pestle and mortar or stir a teaspoon handle in the pot, to grind the magic sparkles to a fine powder. Use a large brush to spread edible glue thinly over the cake (not the snowmen). Tilt the cake and sprinkle with the magic sparkles.

19 Pipe a small plain shell around the base of the cake with a number 2 nozzle. Pipe a little more royal icing onto the snowflakes and attach to side of cake.

Cake
DIFFICULTY
RATING

Chocolate Wedding Cake

Karen Goble

This elegant chocolate wedding cake was inspired by a design on the wallpaper at a friend's house. These ornate designs are back in fashion with golds, bronzes and rich reds, which work well on chocolate.

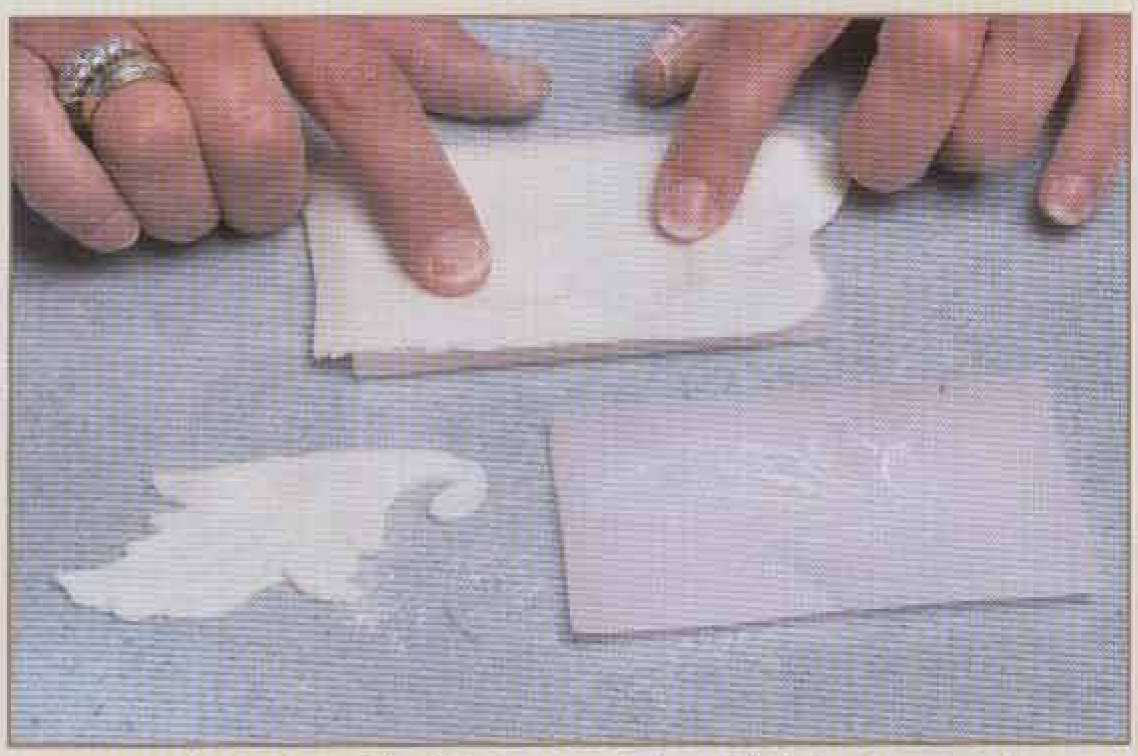
YOU WILL NEED

- chocolate sponge base cakes round 15, 20, 25cm (6, 8, 10in)
- cake drum round 35.5cm (14in)
- thin card boards round 15, 20cm (6, 8in)
- chocolate sugarpaste 2.5kg (5lb 8oz)
- chocolate buttercream
- icing sugar
- flower paste
- edible lustre sprays gold, bronze, and red (PME)
- decorative design mould (R. L. Clement)
- decorative leaf mould (R. L. Clement)
- lace flower moulds 44-1482 and 44-1601 (CK Products)
- blossom veiner/cutter (Sunflower SugarArt)
- fine stamens
- wires 26 gauge
- white stem tape
- cutting wheel (PME)
- craft knife
- dog bone tool
- posy pick
- gold cord
- gold ribbon for the board

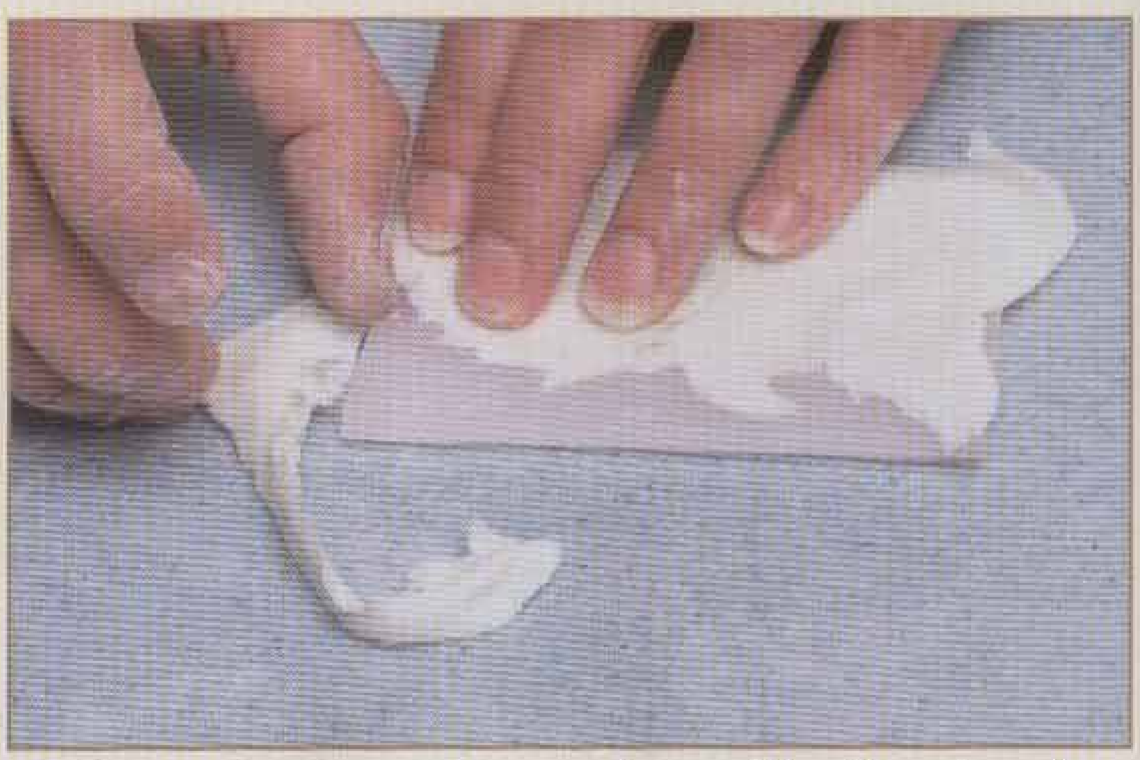
PREPARATION

Sandwich each cake with buttercream and place the cakes on their boards then cover with chocolate buttercream. Roll out chocolate sugarpaste and cover each cake separately. Dowel and stack the cakes.

1 Roll out a small piece of flower paste to $^1/_4$cm ($^1/_{10}$in) thick, use icing sugar to dust the paste. When the paste has dried a little it is easier to work with.



2 Dust the pair of leaf lace moulds with icing sugar then push the rolled flower paste into the mould.

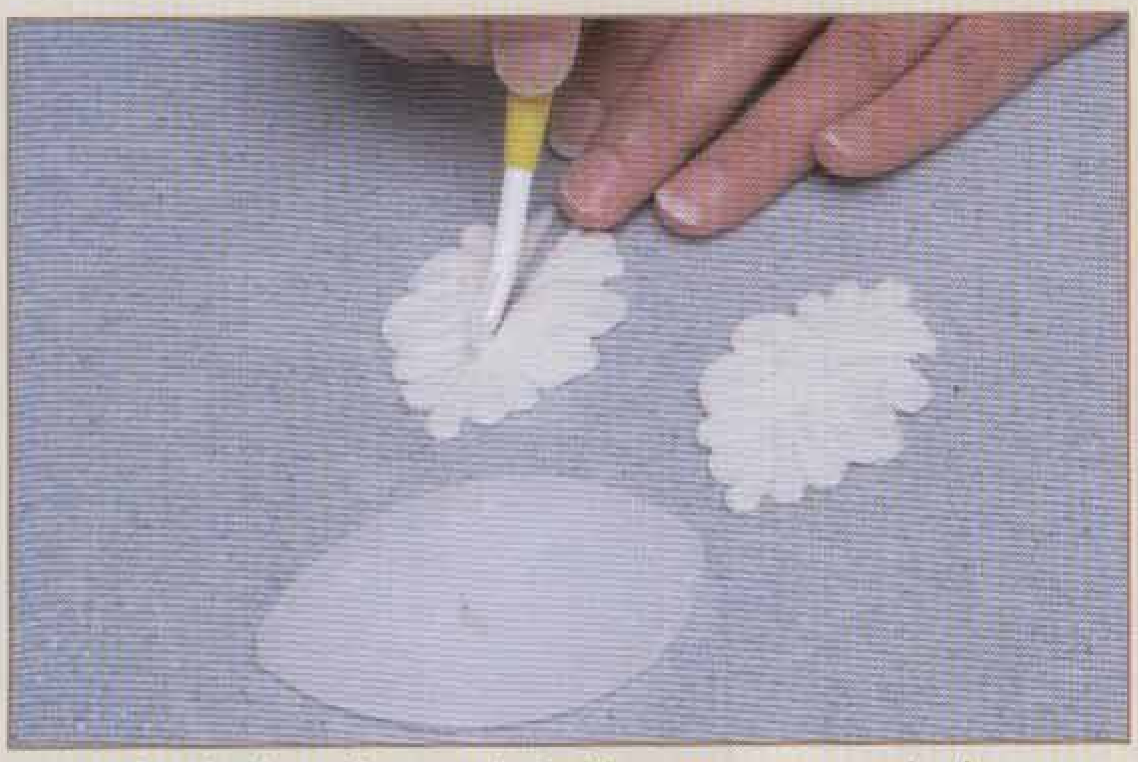


3 Put one hand onto the paste in mould and gently pull away the excess paste with the other hand, rub your hand back and forth over the paste to neaten the edges. Make eight pairs of lace leaves.

4 Place the leaves onto some kitchen roll and spray all over with gold edible lustre spray, leave for a few seconds to dry.

5 Spray the centre part of the leaves with bronze edible lustre. Leave for a few seconds to dry.

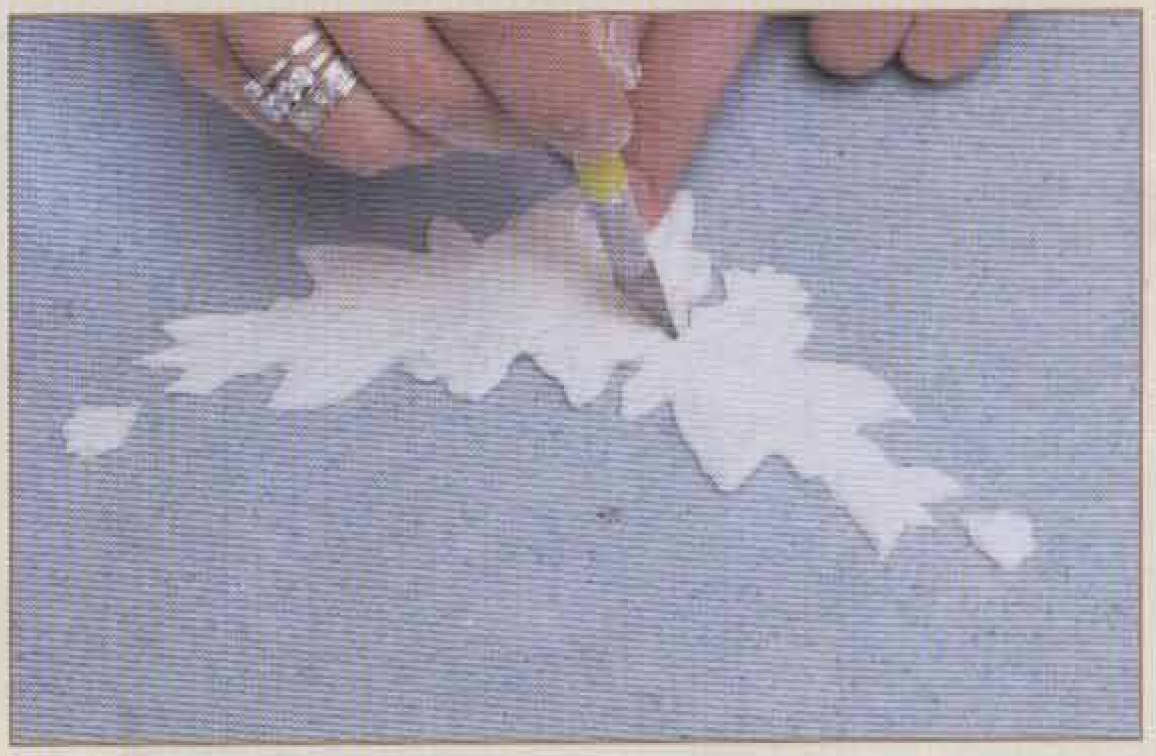
6 Spray the top edges with red lustre spray, leave for a few seconds to dry. Divide the base cake into four equal sections and attach the leaves as shown.



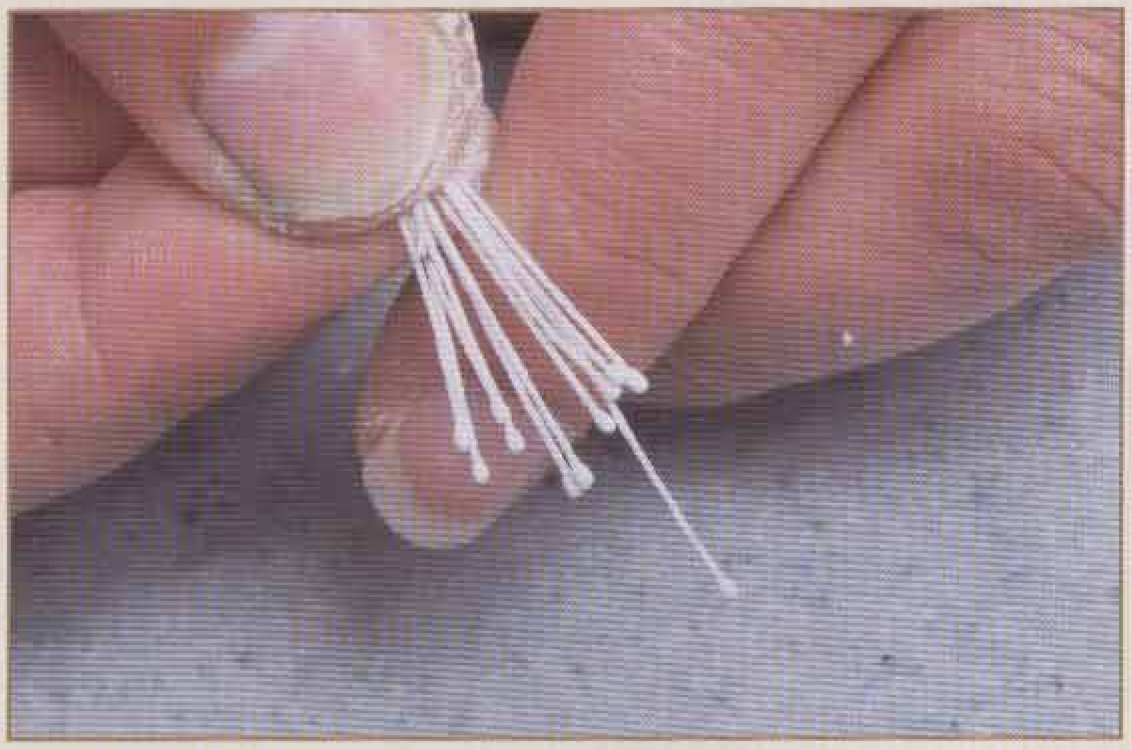
7 Make the lace diamonds in the same way as the leaves. You will require eight; these are sprayed with the gold. When dry enough to handle place around the middle tier. Make two for the base cake and cut them in half lengthways. Refer to the main cake to see how they should be attached.

8 Use only part of the small lace flower, push the rolled paste into the mould then remove and trim with a craft knife. You will require eight small flowers sprayed with gold, these need to be placed in-between the diamonds on the middle tier.

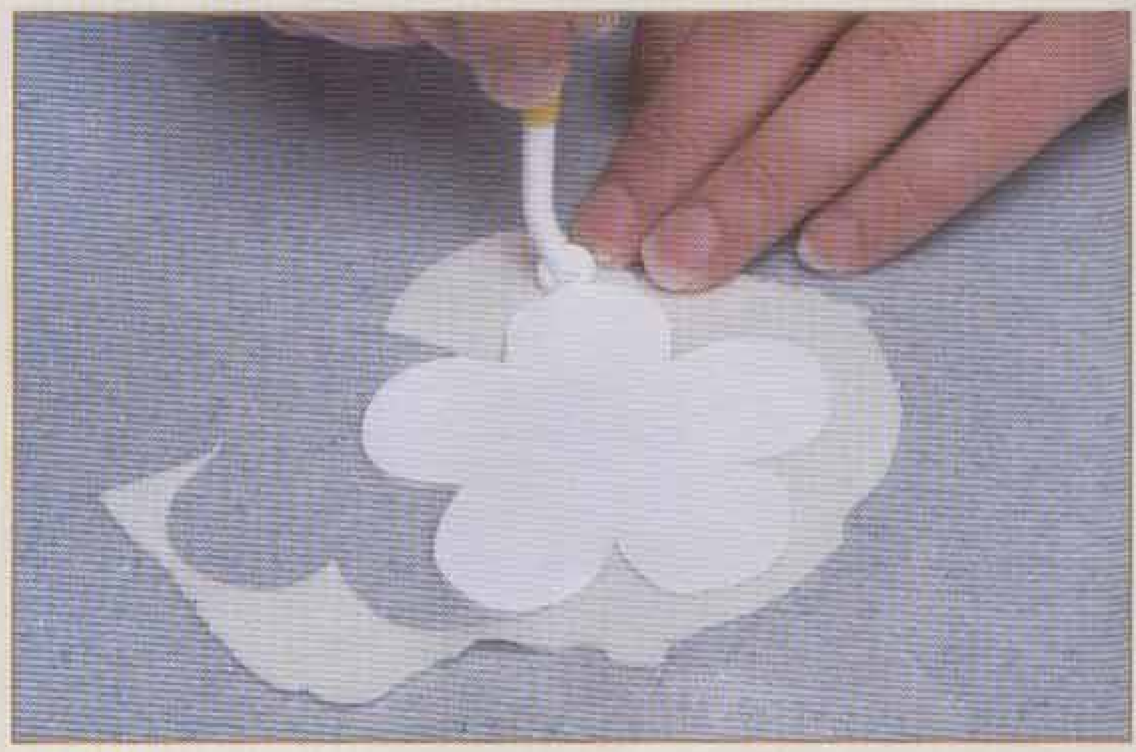
9 Make four large lace flower pieces in the same way as before. Remove the main flower at the base of the lace, on two of the decorations. Join together so they appear complete.



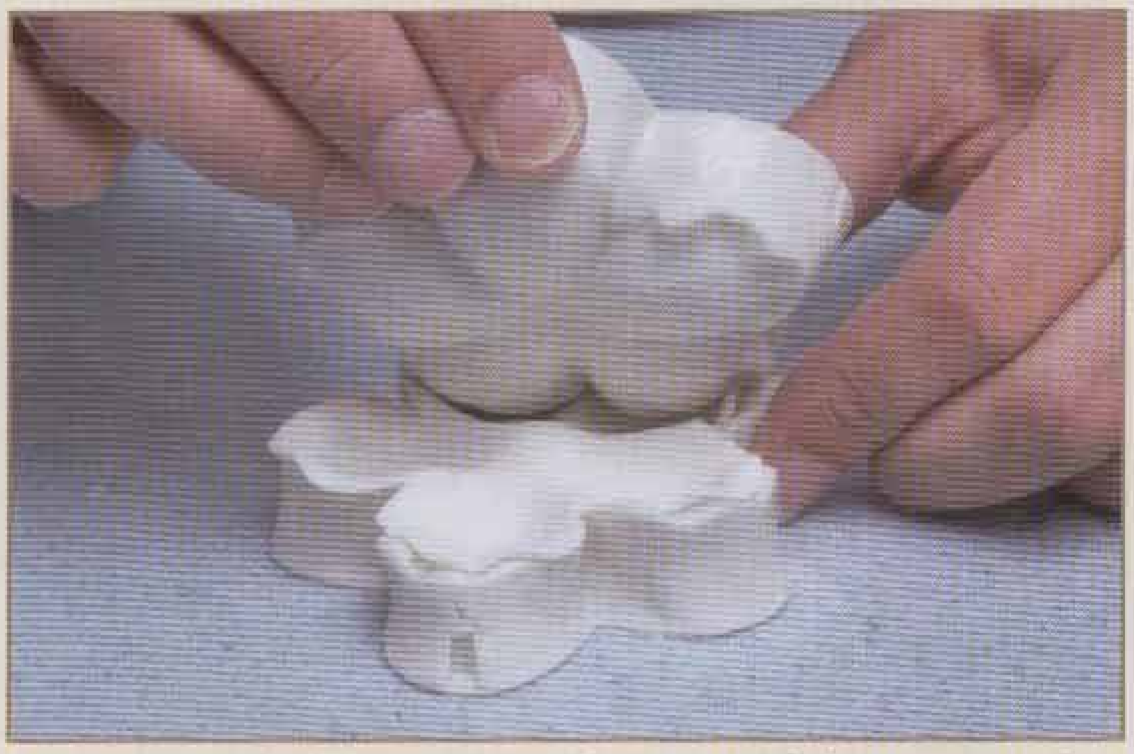
10 Keep the flower you have removed and spray all with gold, bronze and red in same way as for the leaves. Place on the top tier of cake. Refer to the main picture.



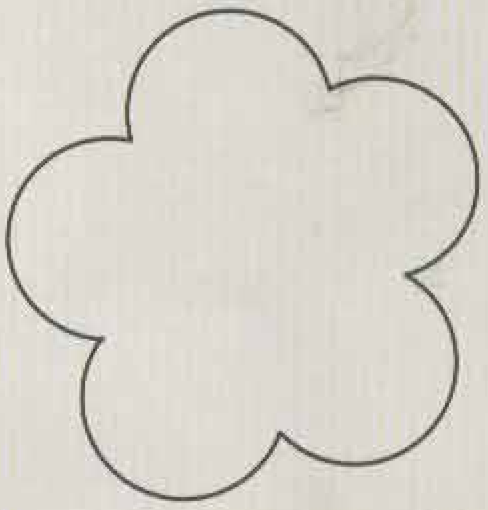
11 Tape fine stamens to a 26g wire and make one head longer then the others.

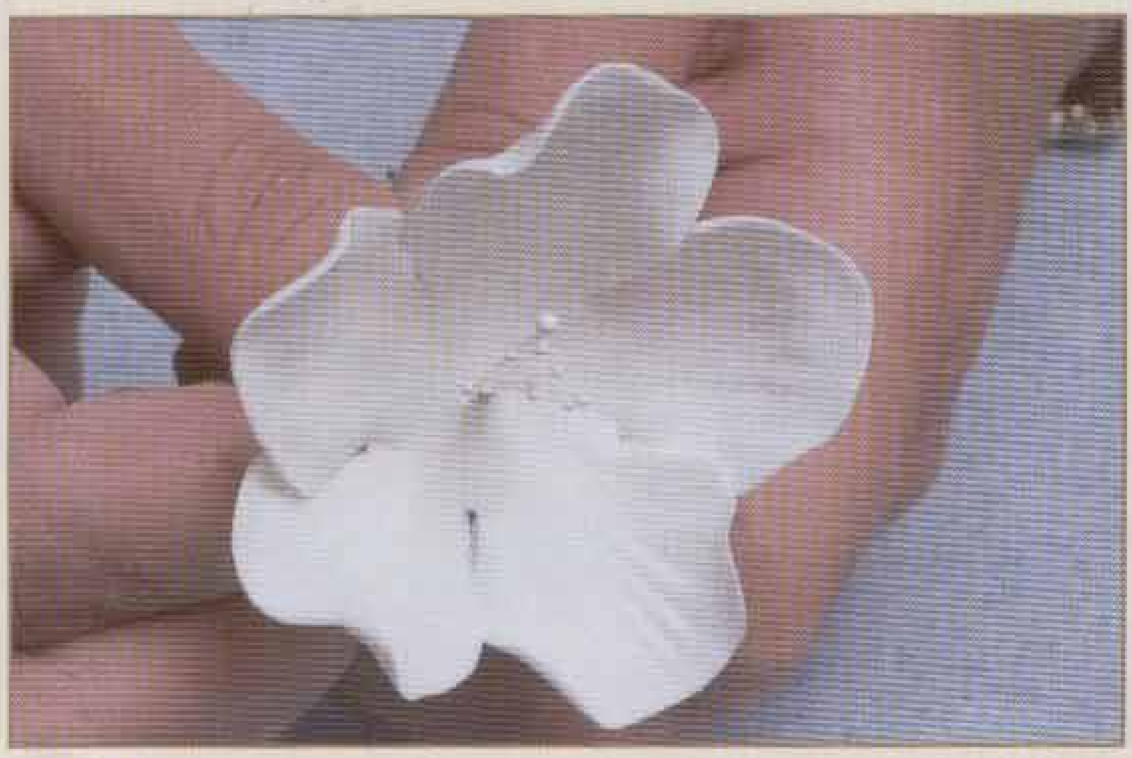


12 Use the template or the cutter which comes with this double sided veiner and cut out three blossoms. Ball the outer edge of the petals.



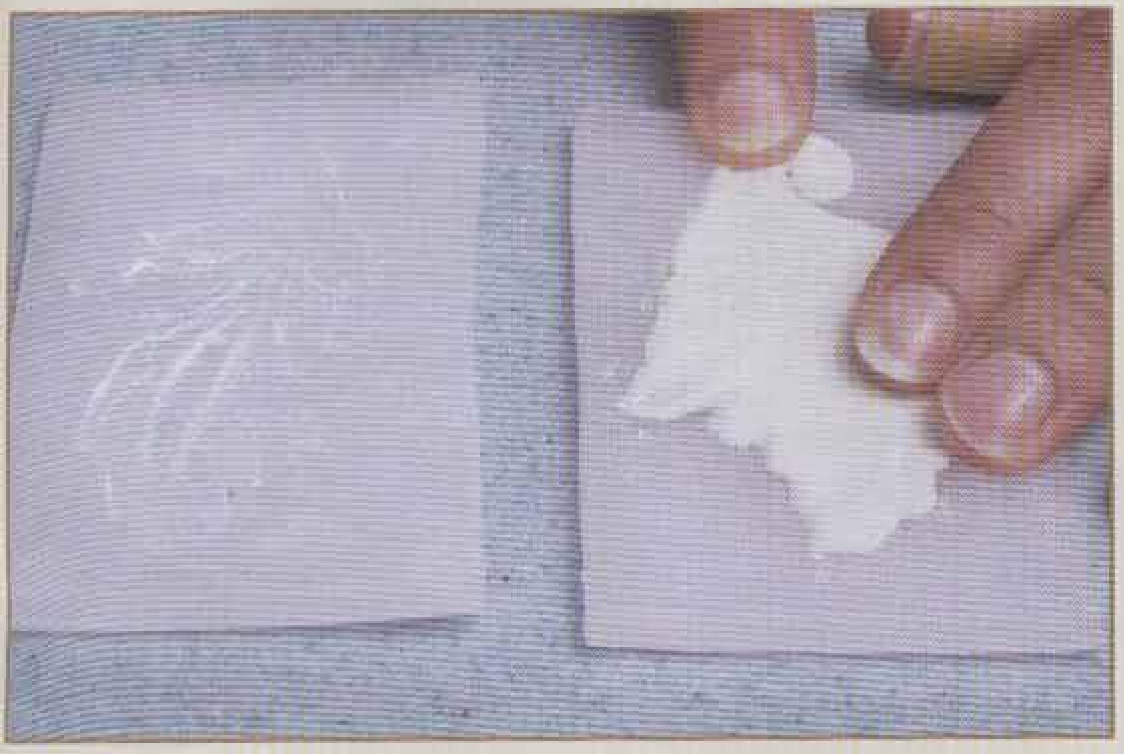
13 Place the blossom into the centre of the veiner and then push the two sides together to vein the blossom, remove carefully. *Make sure the notches match up on the veiner for an even impression (Ed).*



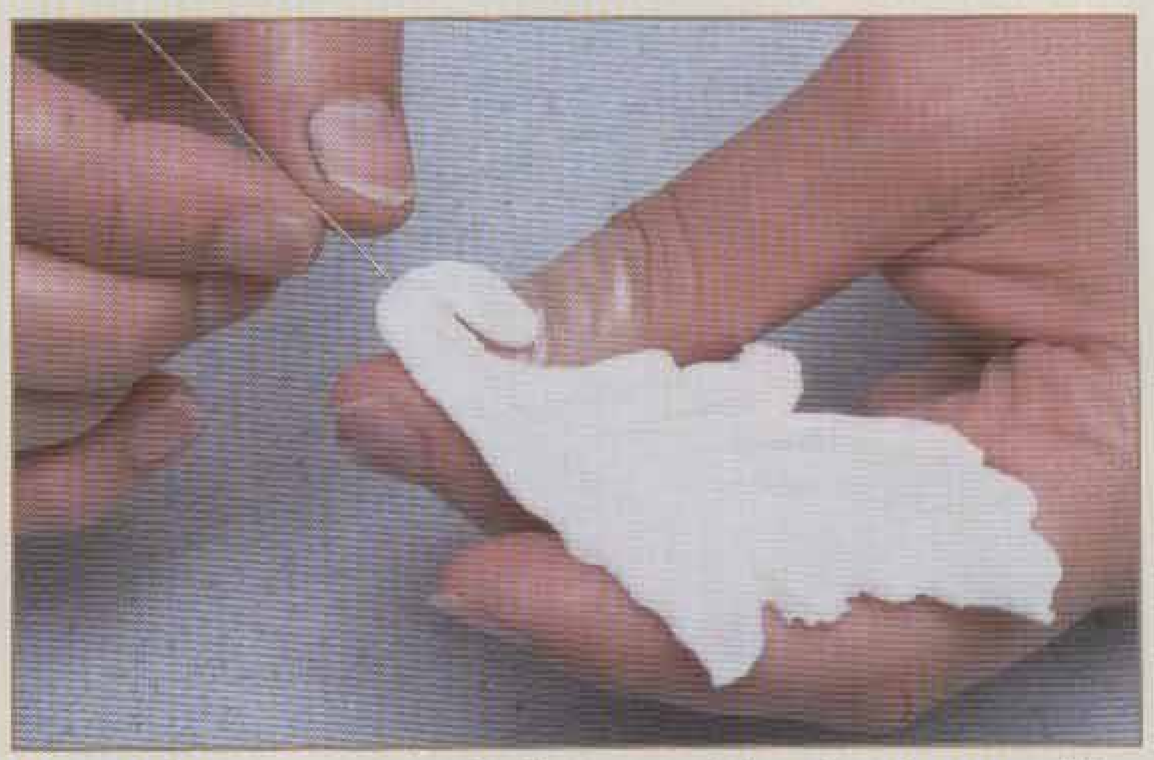


14 Push the stamens into the centre of the blossom add a tiny ball of paste to the back to secure in place. You may need a little water or edible glue.

15 When the blossoms are dry spray with gold and the edge of the petals with red.



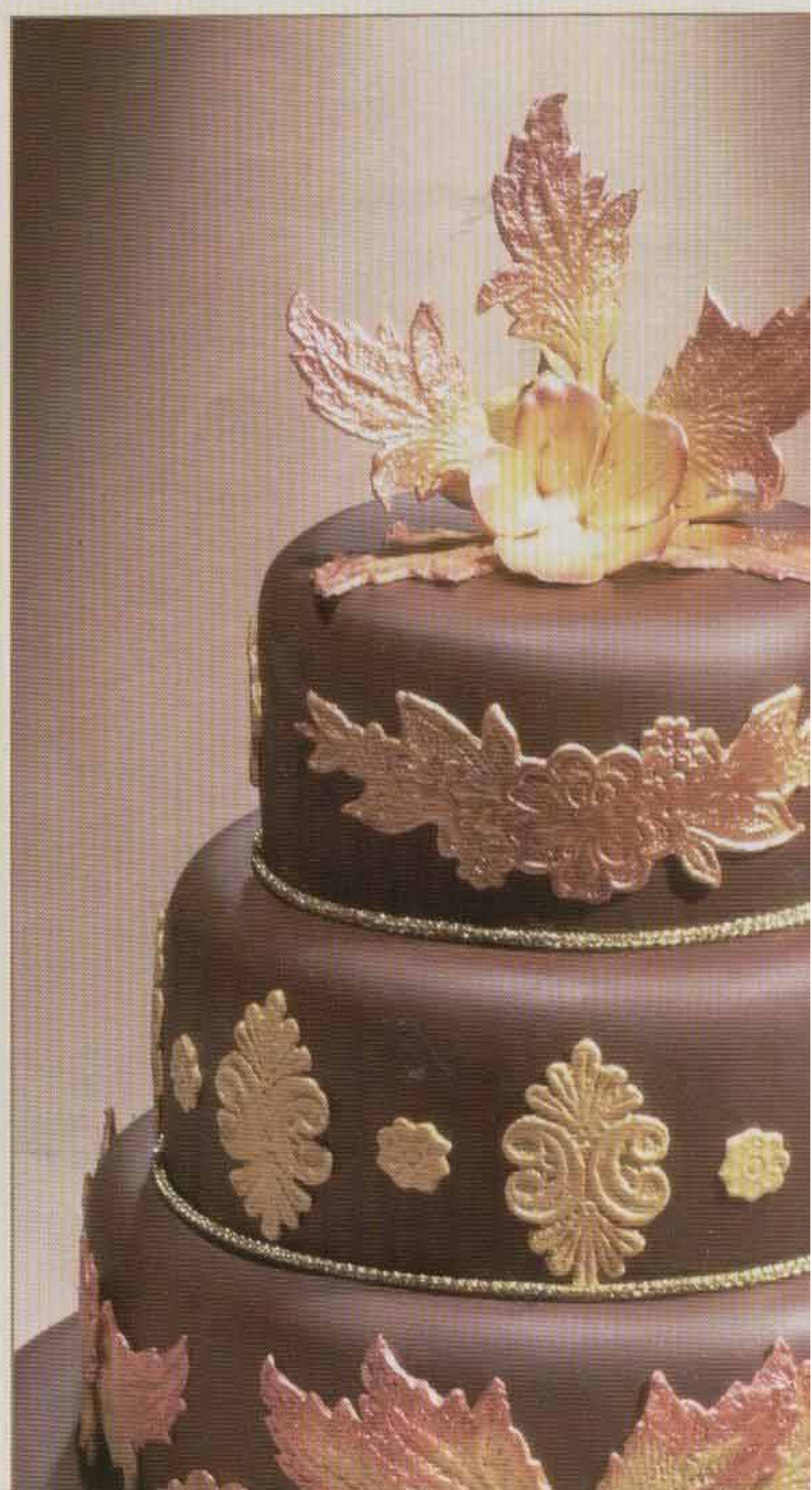
16 Make six more lace leaves but with three of these vein both sides, place in the reverse side of the mould then press and remove from mould.

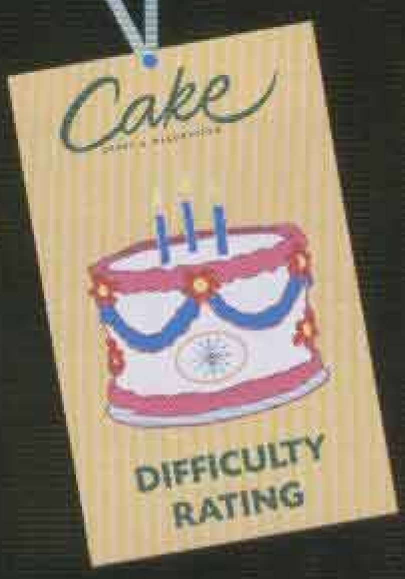


17 Place a wire into the bottom of the three leaves with veining on both sides and leave to dry. Spray all the lace leaves as for the base cake.

18 Arrange on top of the cake inside a posy pick. The three blossoms are together with the leaves on wires. The remaining three leaves are placed flat on top of the cake also in-between the blossoms.

19 Finish the cake off with gold ribbon around the bottom board and gold cord around the base of each tier.





Christmas Flower *Arrangement*

Ulla Netzband

Poinsettia (Euphorbia pulcherrima), Snowberries (Symphoricarpos albus) and Winter Flowering Jasmine (Jasminum nudiflorum)

Poinsettias are flowers of Mexican origin. They are named after Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first United States Ambassador to Mexico. The plant bears dark green leaves. The top leaves known as bracts are red, pink, pale green or white and are often mistaken for the flowers. The actual flowers are grouped within the small yellow structures found in the centre of each leaf bunch.

Snowberries are a popular ornamental shrub in gardens, grown for their decorative fruit.

Winter Flowering Jasmine will surprise you in the cold days of December, January and February with its small bright yellow flowers. The flowers come out before the leaves appear.

POINSETTIA YOU WILL NEED

- paste colour lemon (Wilton)
- paste colour Christmas green, melon, (Sugarflair)
- poinsettia cutters
- poinsettia bract veiners (Great Impressions)
- poinsettia leaf veiners (Great Impressions)
- wires white 33, 26 gauge
- edible lustre spray pearl (PME)
- hot glue gun
- green tape
- dusting powder holly/ivy, vine green, edelweiss (SK)
- dusting powder foliage green (Sugarflair)
- isopropyl alcohol
- small sharp scissors
- cocktail stick
- rosewater or sugar glue
- dimpled sponge

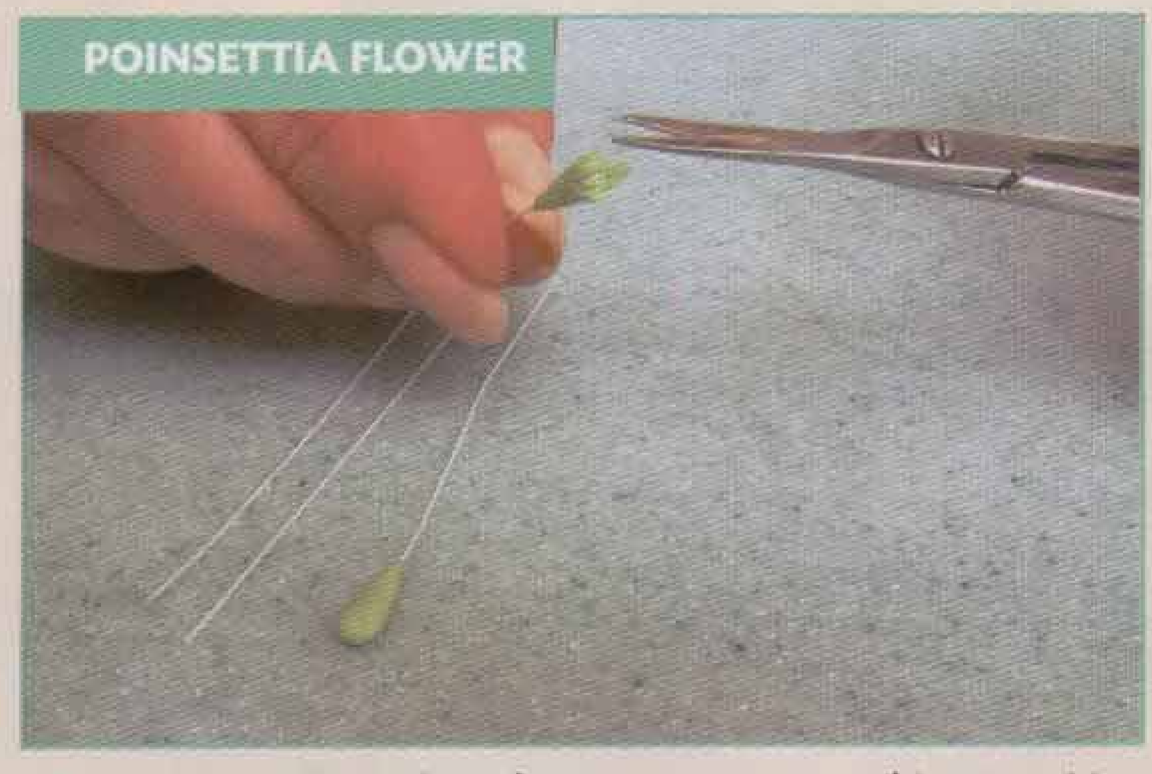
WINTER JASMINE YOU WILL NEED

- yellow paste (Wilton)
- N6 cutter (Orchard Products)
- miniature calyx cutter (Cel Cakes)
- fine white stamens
- small cel-stick
- dusting powders daffodil, vine, holly/ivy (SK)
- chestnut brown paste (Sugarflair)
- mid green tape
- isopropyl alcohol
- rosewater or sugar glue

SNOWBERRIES YOU WILL NEED

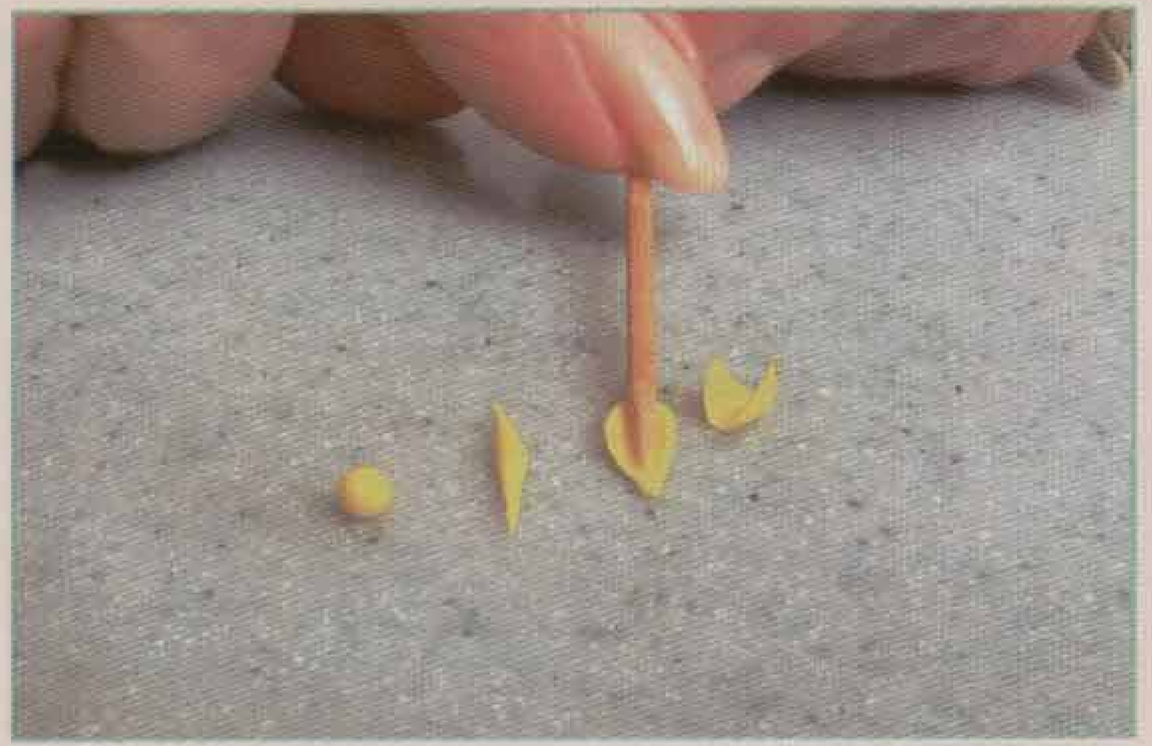
- white paste
- wires white 33, 24 gauge
- dust vine green (SK)
- plain cutting wheel (PME)
- brown tape
- 1/4 strength confectioner's glaze

POINSETTIA FLOWER

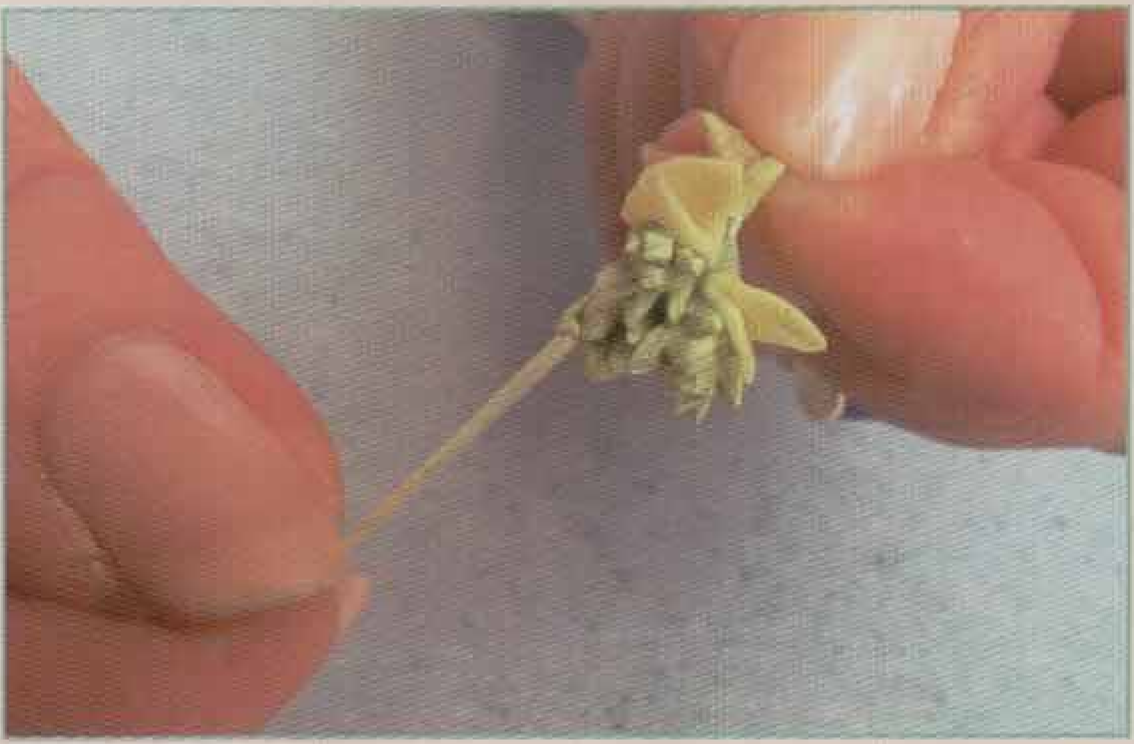


1 Form a small teardrop from green paste and insert a 33g white wire. With sharp scissors make many tiny cuts into the tip of the teardrop.

2 Mix a little vine with edelweiss and alcohol to achieve a creamy mixture. Paint the tips of the cut spikes with this mixture.

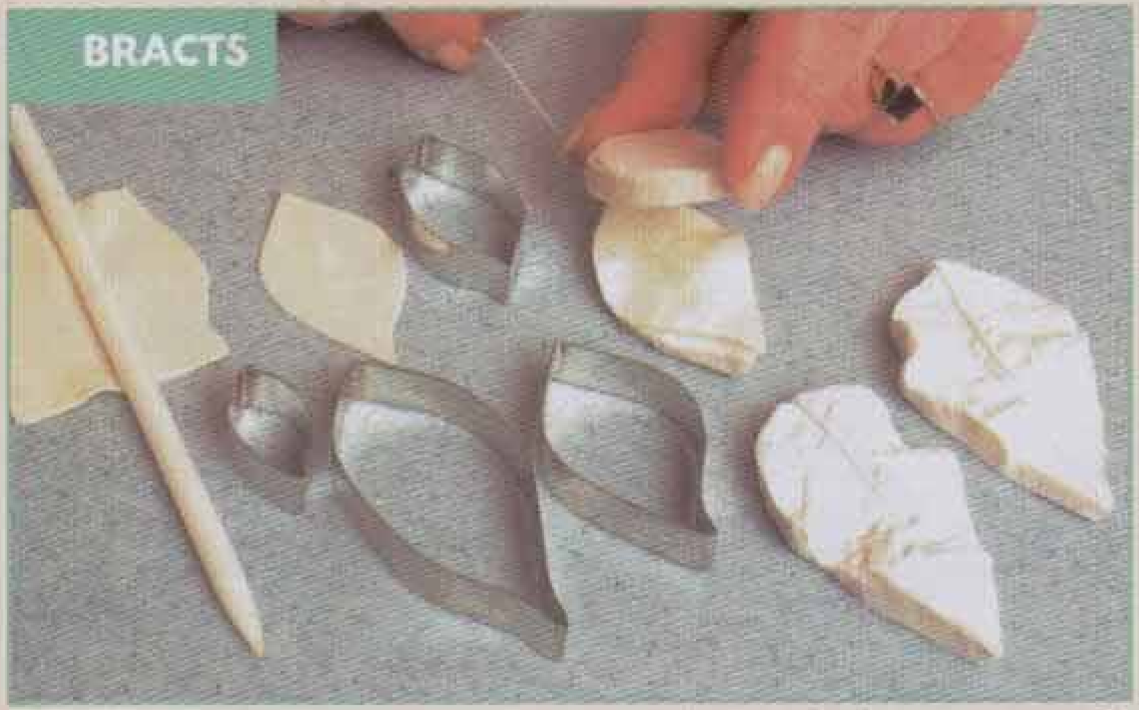


3 Colour a minute ball of paste lemon and roll it between your fingers. Place a cocktail stick onto the centre and rock it from side to side to achieve a diamond shape. Fold it in half and attach one side to the side of the flower. It should resemble an open bird's beak.



4 Tape them together in a group of three. Repeat this twice more.

BRACTS

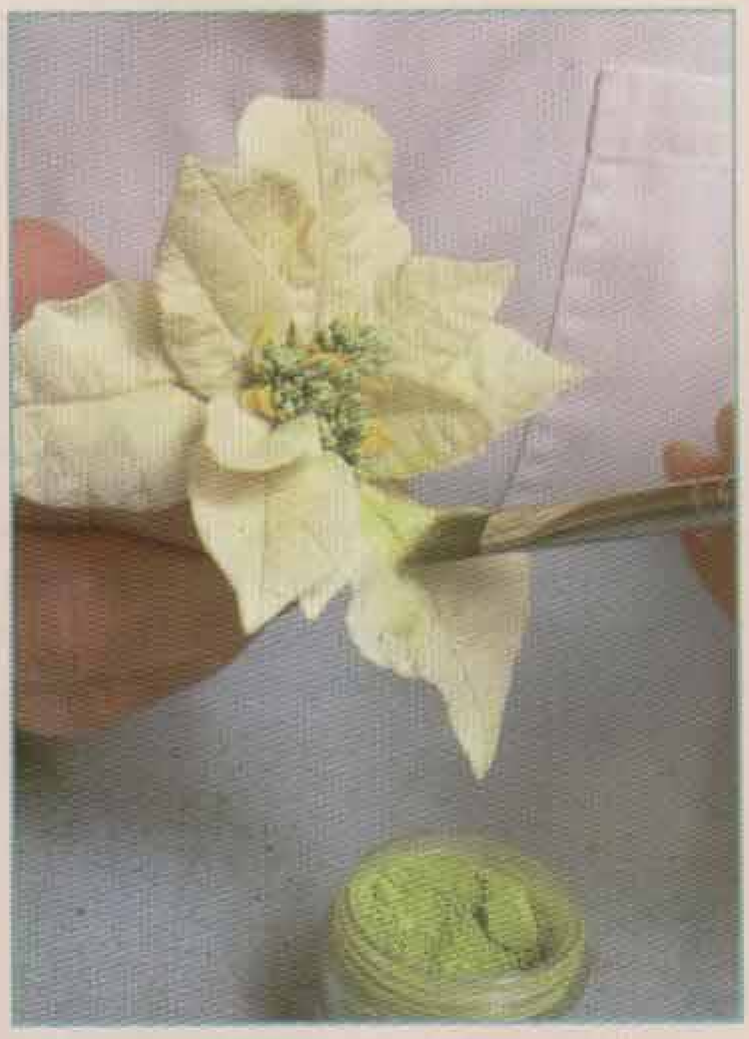


5 Roll out melon coloured paste, leave a thicker vein $^1/_3$ of the way up the paste and cut out one large bract. Insert a 26g hooked wire. Thin the edges with a ball tool and vein. Leave to dry over dimpled sponge. Make three more with the other three cutters. Repeat this to make a further eight bracts.

6 Take one of the groups of flowers and tape the smallest bract behind it with half width tape. Now attach the remaining three bracts one to the left of the centre, one the right and one again to the left. Bend all bracts back you should now have a fan shape.

7 Make two more sections as before and tape the three sections together, ensure that the flowers sit right in the centre.

8 Take a little vine green and give the bracts some colour by shading from the centre towards the tips.



9 Make three leaves for each flower use one of the poinsettia cutters and vein them on the leaf veiner. Dust them with foliage green on the front, then holly/ivy on both sides and then gently over dust both sides with vine.

10 Spray some of the leaves with pearl edible lustre spray.

11 Position the leaves equally behind the flowers and tape together. Put the whole stem through the steam of a kettle to settle the dusting powder.

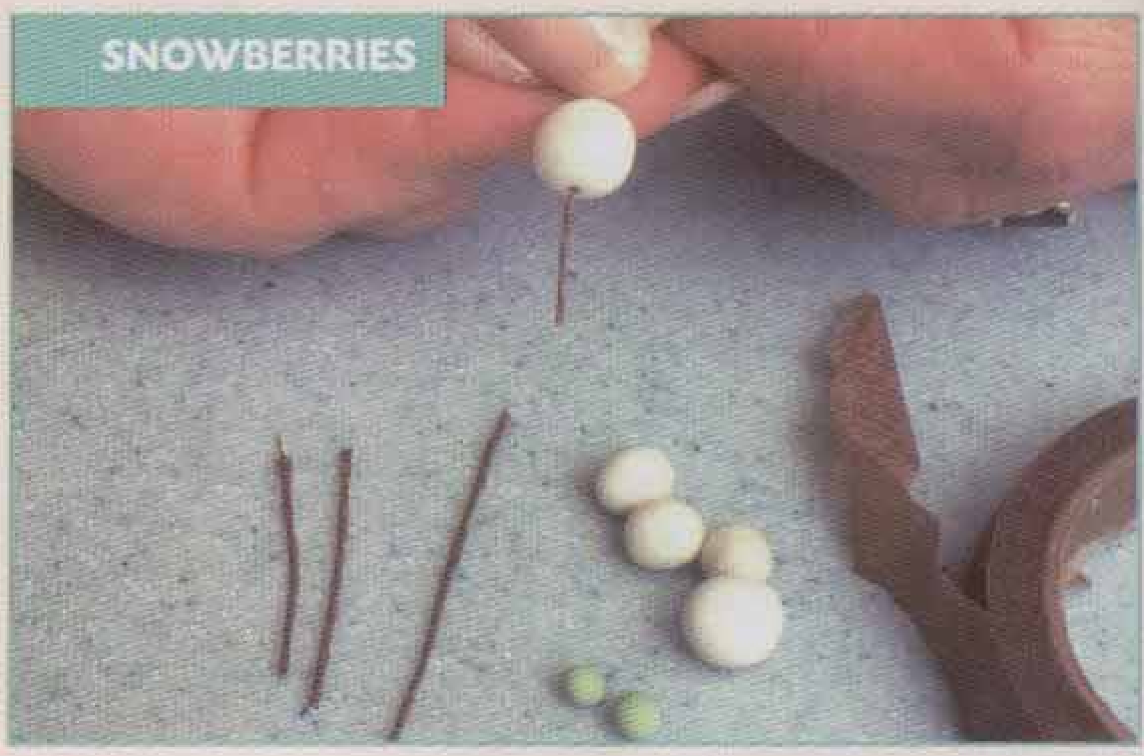
Cake Tip

I did not use the largest cutter in the set. I used the smallest cutter twice and elongated the paste on one shape, hence still getting four different sizes. If you want more than four bracts in each section, elongate any size cutter.

CakeTip

The Rainbow oasis is used by florists and is only available as wet oasis. To hold your flowers use a hot glue gun to attach the oasis to the base of the container and also add a little hot glue to the base of the wires before inserting them into the foam.

SNOWBERRIES



12 Tape a length of 33g wire with $^{1}/_{3}$ width tape. Cut the wire into eight sections. Form balls of white paste into varied sizes and thread the wire through the ball leave a tiny bit of wire exposed.

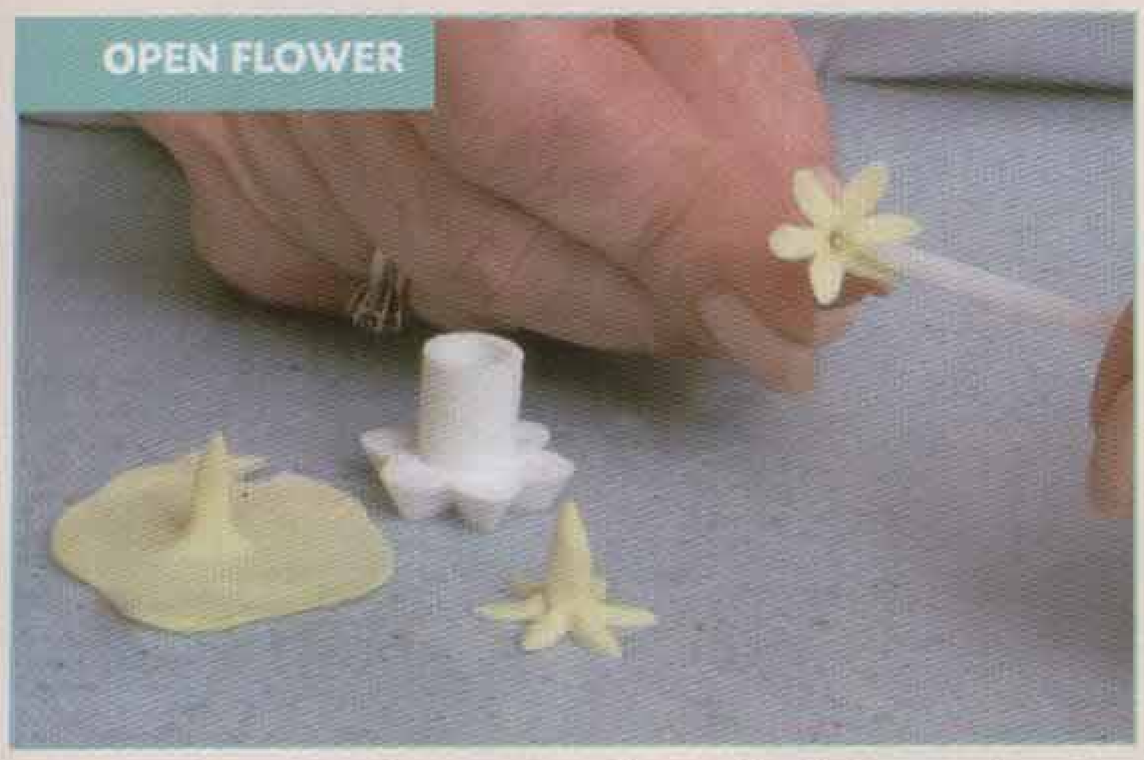
13 Gently squeeze the paste between your finger and thumb to form the berry. Mark three little lines close to the exposed wire.

14 Make a few really tiny balls to start off the stem.Dust the tiny buds with vine dusting powder and add just a hint of vine to the white berries nearest to the wire. When dry dip into $^{1}/_{4}$ glaze.

15 Use 24g wire arrange the berries in clusters and strengthen the wire where necessary if more support is needed.

WINTER FLOWERING JASMINE - STAMENS

16 Take fine white stamens and colour the heads with a mixture of vine mixed with isopropyl alcohol.



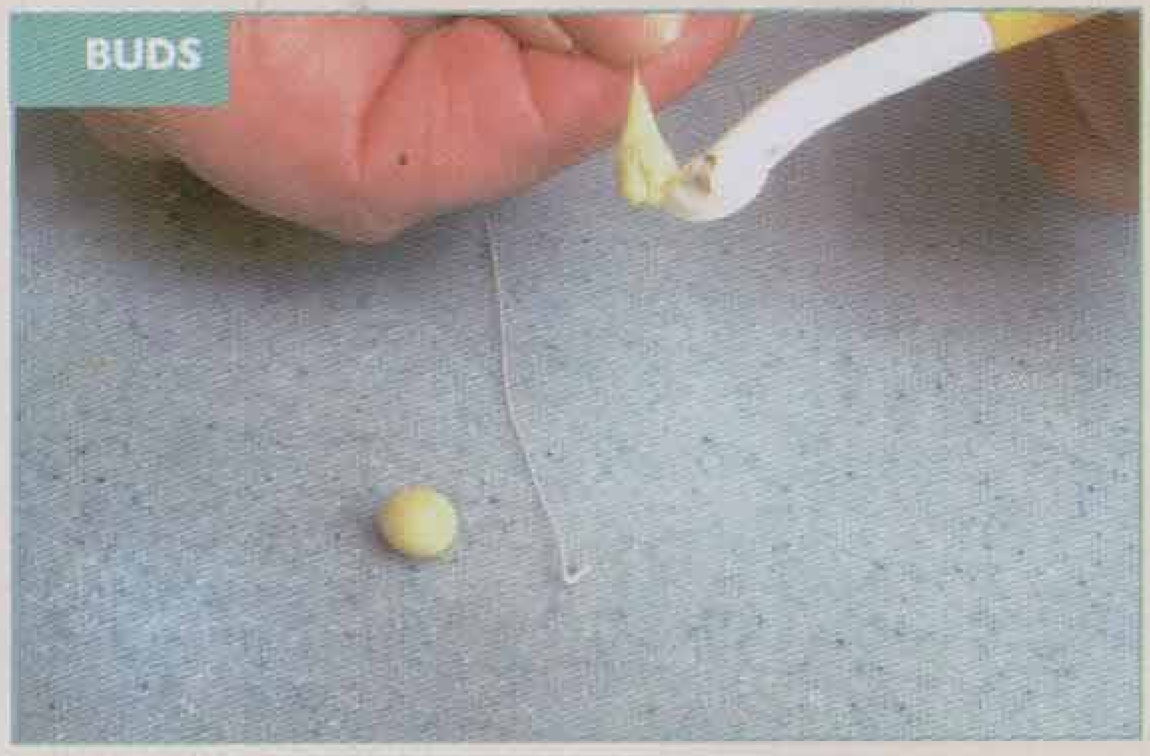
17 Make a very slim mexican hat and roll the paste away until it is quite fine. Put a little cornflour onto the cutter. Cut it out. Broaden but do not lengthen each petal.

CakeTip

Add a little grease to the wire before threading it through the flower, it will become much easier to get it through the narrow shaft.

18 Drill a 30g wire through the centre and attach the paste to the wire. Take a very short stamen head and insert this into the centre of the flower. Give each petal movement. Dust gently with daffodil.

19 This is made in exactly the same way as for the flower but this time let all the petals fall forward.



20 Take a ball of paste and insert a hooked 33g wire. Roll the paste down the wire leave a bulbous tip. With the cutting wheel mark the tip into three equal sections.

21 Cut out the calyx with the miniature cutter. Slightly elongate each sepal and attach it to the back of the flower, leave the tips unattached.

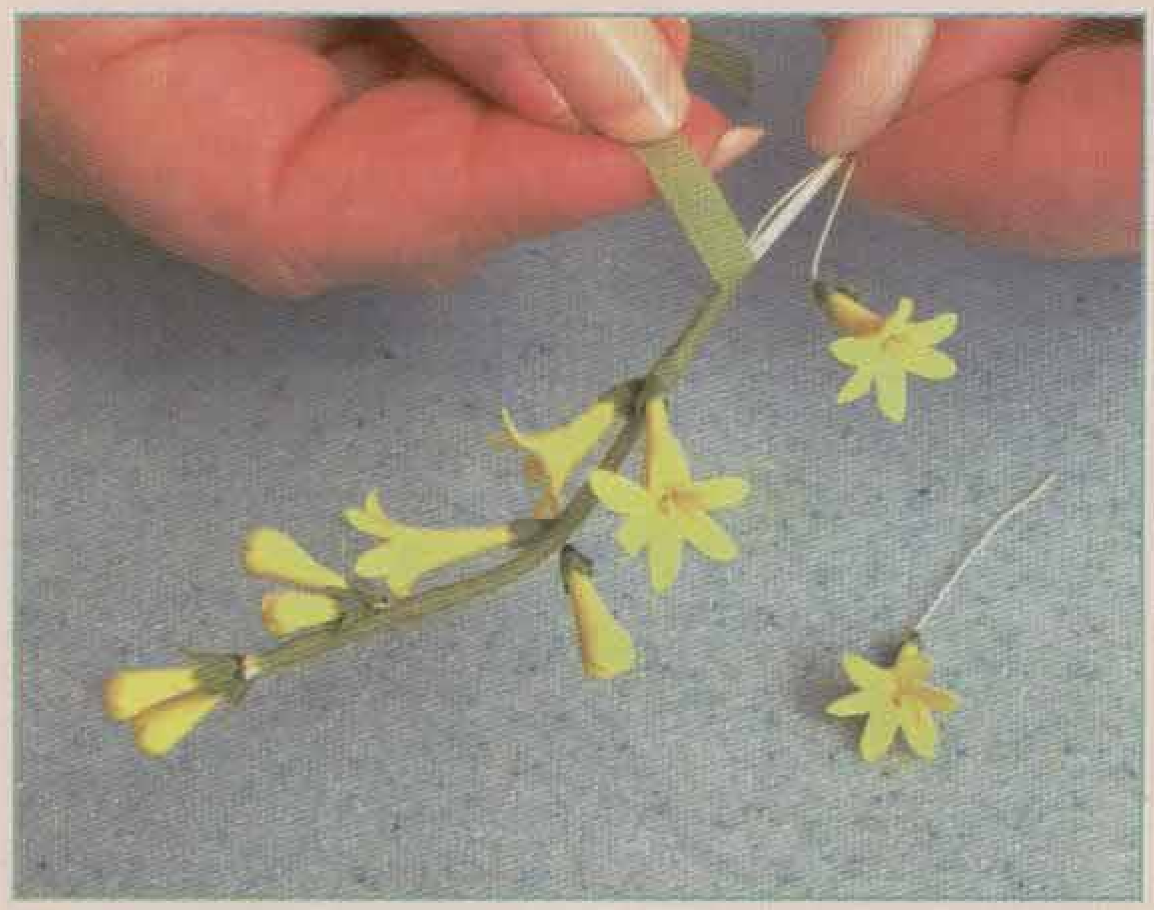
22 Dust the calyx with holly/ivy. Add a little chestnut brown to the very base of the calyx.

CakeTip CRAFT & DECORATION

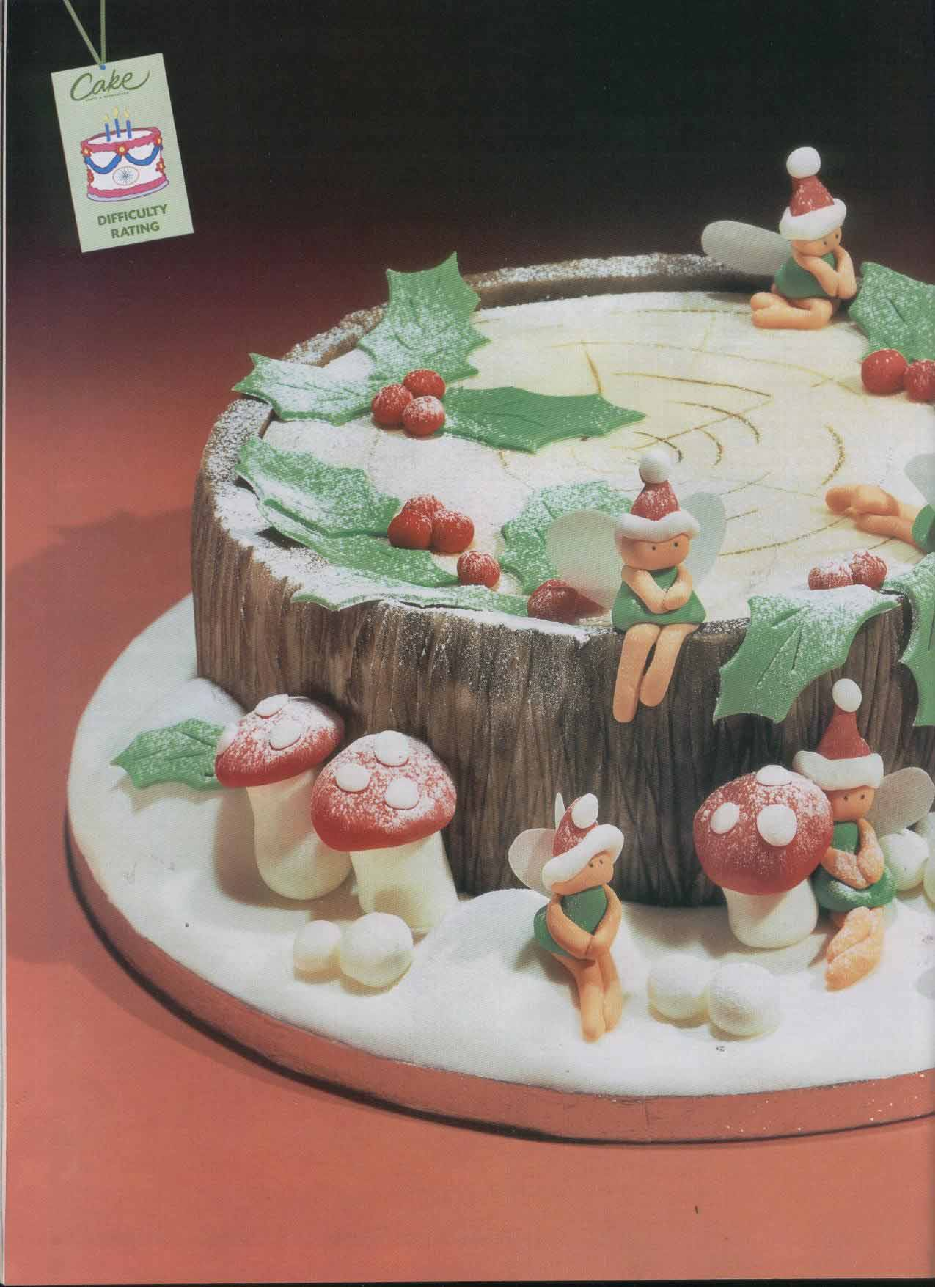
Not all buds need to be at the beginning of the stem. The larger buds may be interspersed with the flowers.

CakeTip CRAFT & DECORATION

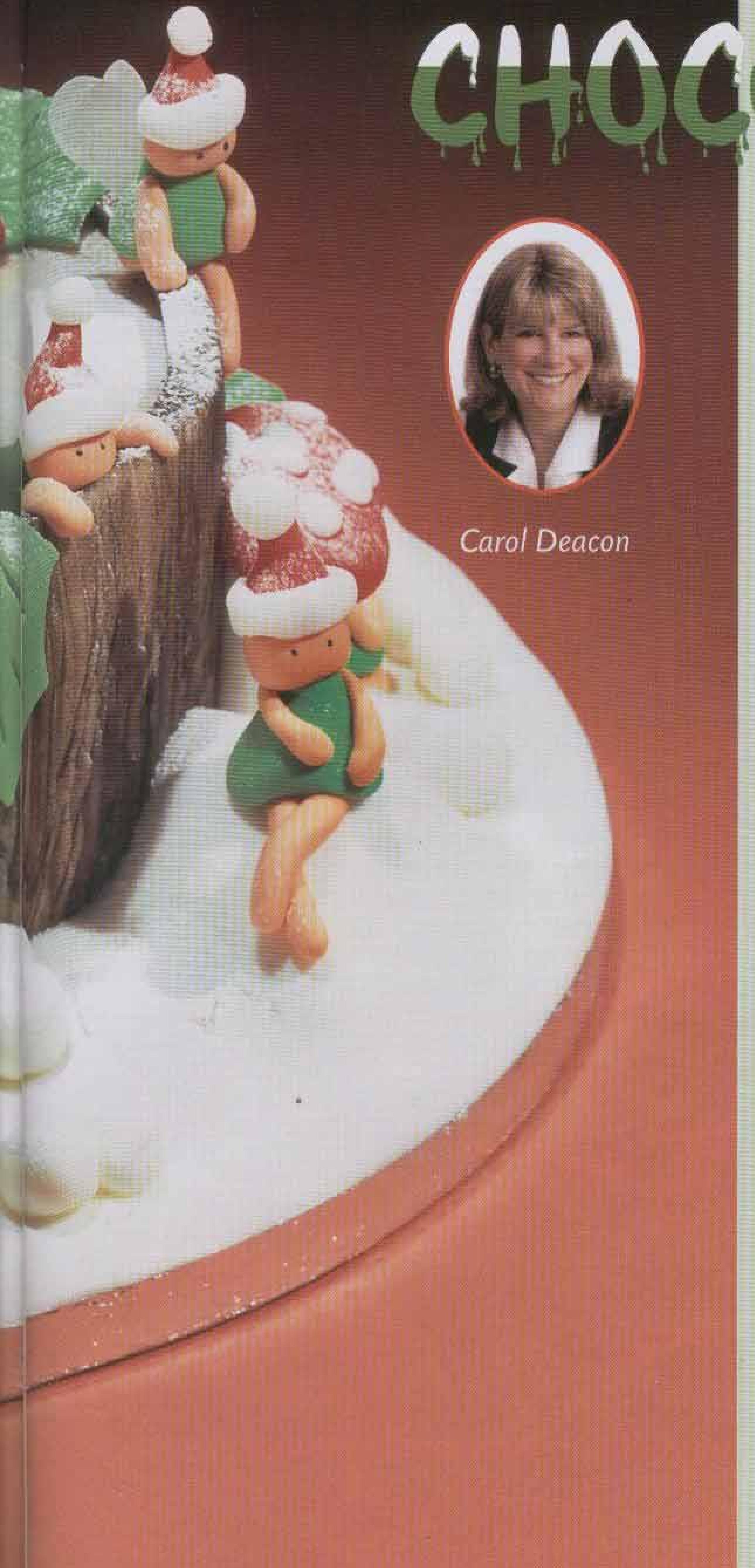
The calyx is very fragile and time consuming to make. Use 1/3 width nile green tape and cut out five tiny 'V's' and wrap this around the base of the flower.



23 Start the stem off with two tiny green buds. Add a 24g wire and tape in two more small yellow buds, opposite each other with 1/3 width nile green tape. Add two more buds on the front and back of the stem. Carry on in this way until you have the length of stem you need. Put the whole stem through the steam of a kettle.


Cake
DIFFICULTY
RATING

Christmas CHOCOLATE LOG



Carol Deacon

A charming twist on the traditional Chocolate Log theme.

If you are really pushed for time, but want to do something a bit different for the family, buy a ready iced chocolate log (usually an iced Swiss roll) from the supermarket. Decorate it with the fairies, toadstools and holly leaves shown here and give it a liberal dusting of icing sugar 'snow'.

YOU WILL NEED

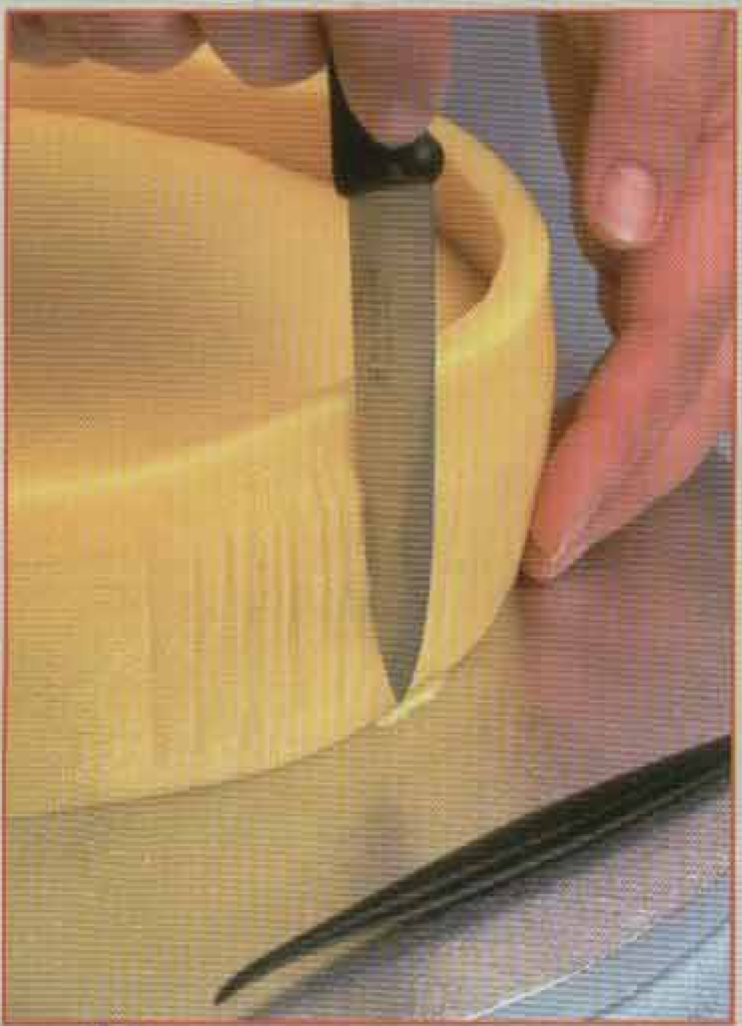
- chocolate cake round 20cm (8in)
- chocolate buttercream 250g (8oz)
- apricot jam 2 tbsp
- marzipan white or golden 750g (1lb 10oz)
- paste colour dark brown, black
- sugarpaste 750g (1lb 10oz) white, green150g (5oz), red 120g (4oz), flesh 45g (1$^{1}/_{2}$oz)
- rice paper 1-2 sheets
- cake drum round 30cm (12in)
- carving knife
- palette knife
- 20cm (8in) round cake board or cake tin
- ruler or tape measure
- cake smoother
- small sharp knife
- veining tool (optional)
- pastry brush or large paintbrush
- fine paintbrush
- circle cutter or piping nozzle
- scissors
- cocktail stick
- tea strainer or small sieve

1 Level the top of the cake and turn it upside down. Slice and fill the cake with buttercream. Reassemble the cake and place towards the back of the cake board.

2 Spread the top and sides with apricot jam.

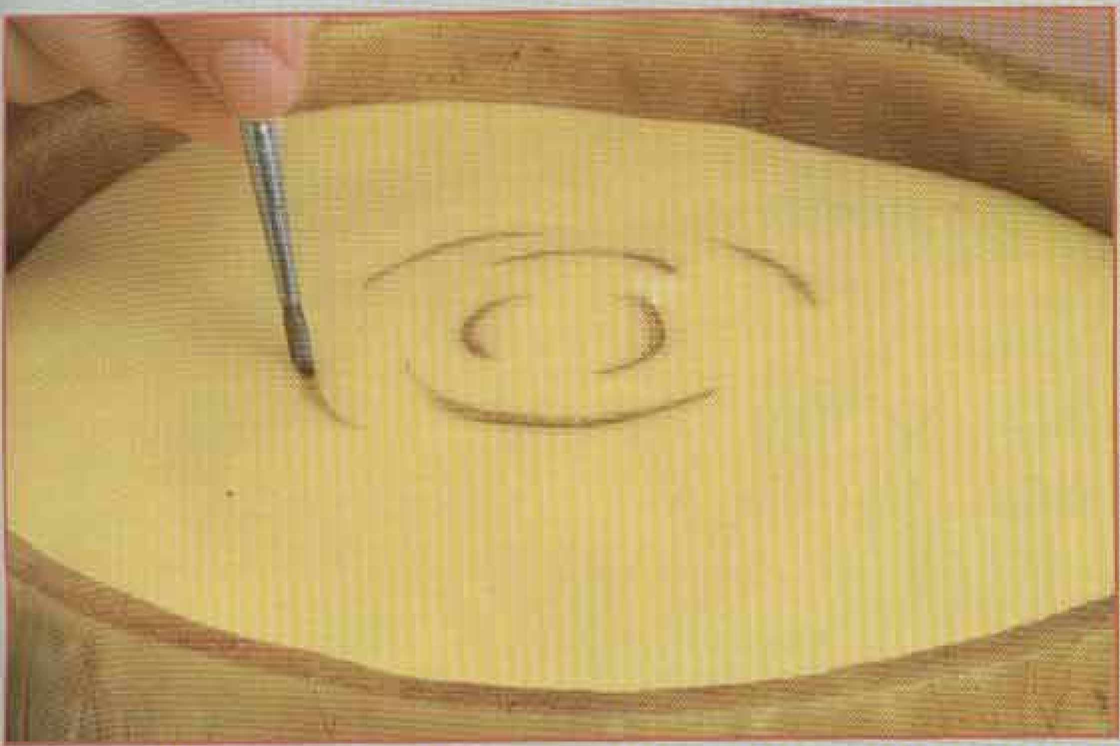
3 Knead and roll out 250g (8oz) marzipan to 5mm ($^1/_4$in) thick. Cut out a disc with either a 20cm (8in) cake board or your baking tin as a template. Lift and place the disc on top of your cake. Keep the excess marzipan.

4 To make the bark around the outside of the cake, roll 500g (1lb 4oz) marzipan into a long sausage and flatten it. Cut a strip 60cm (24in) long and 5mm ($^1/_4$in) wider than the height of your cake. Loosely roll the marzipan up like a bandage. Use plenty of icing sugar to prevent it sticking together. Unroll it around the sides of the cake.



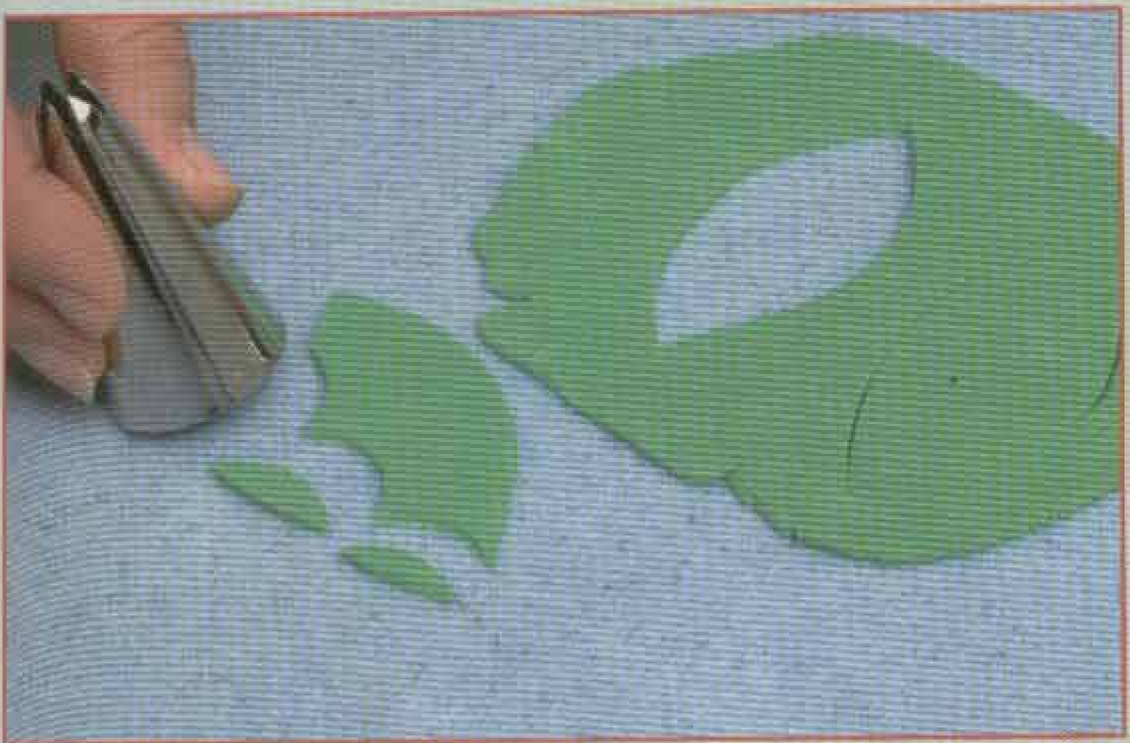
5 Score the sides vertically with a veining tool or the back of your knife. Make the odd criss-cross line too.

6 Paint your 'bark' with watered-down brown food colour. Use a large soft brush such as a pastry brush.

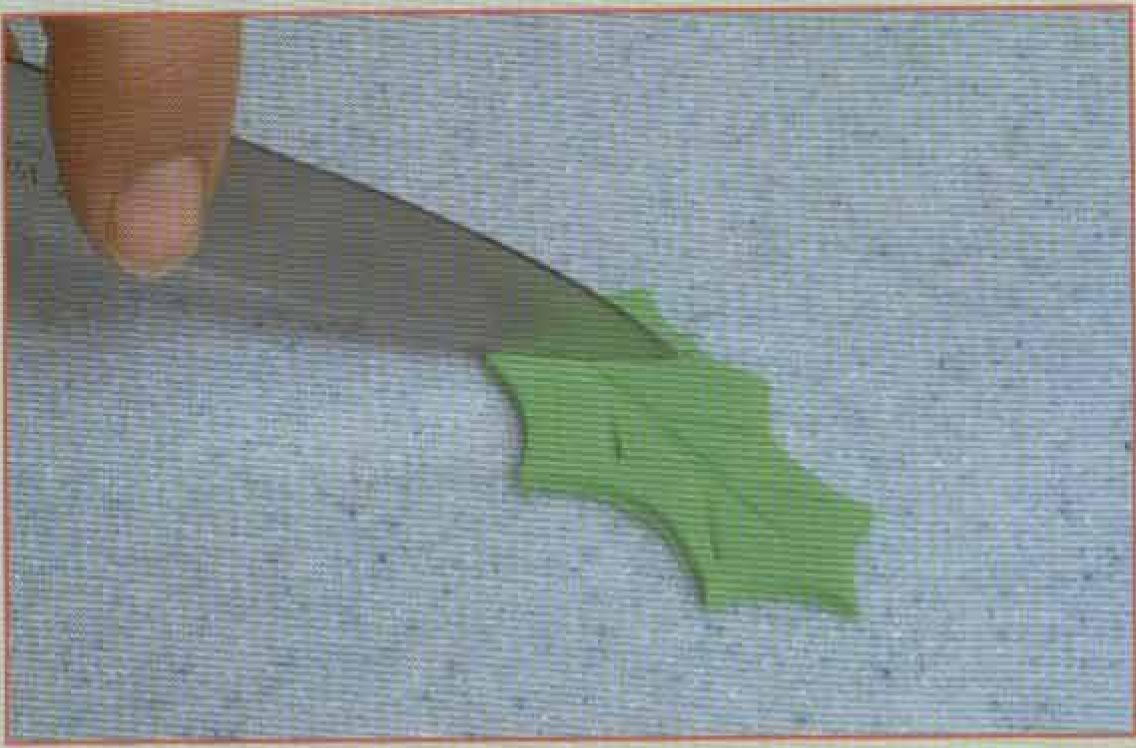


7 Use a fine paintbrush, paint a few age rings and lines radiating out from the centre on top of the cake. Also colour the top and inside edges of the bark.

8 Roll the leftover marzipan into a few balls and stick around the board. Moisten the board and marzipan with water. Roll 600g (1lb 4oz) white sugarpaste into a strip and place over the board. Trim and neaten the edges.



9 To make a holly leaf, thinly roll out green sugarpaste and cut out a simple leaf shape. Take 'bites' out of the edges of the leaf with a piping nozzle or small circle cutter.

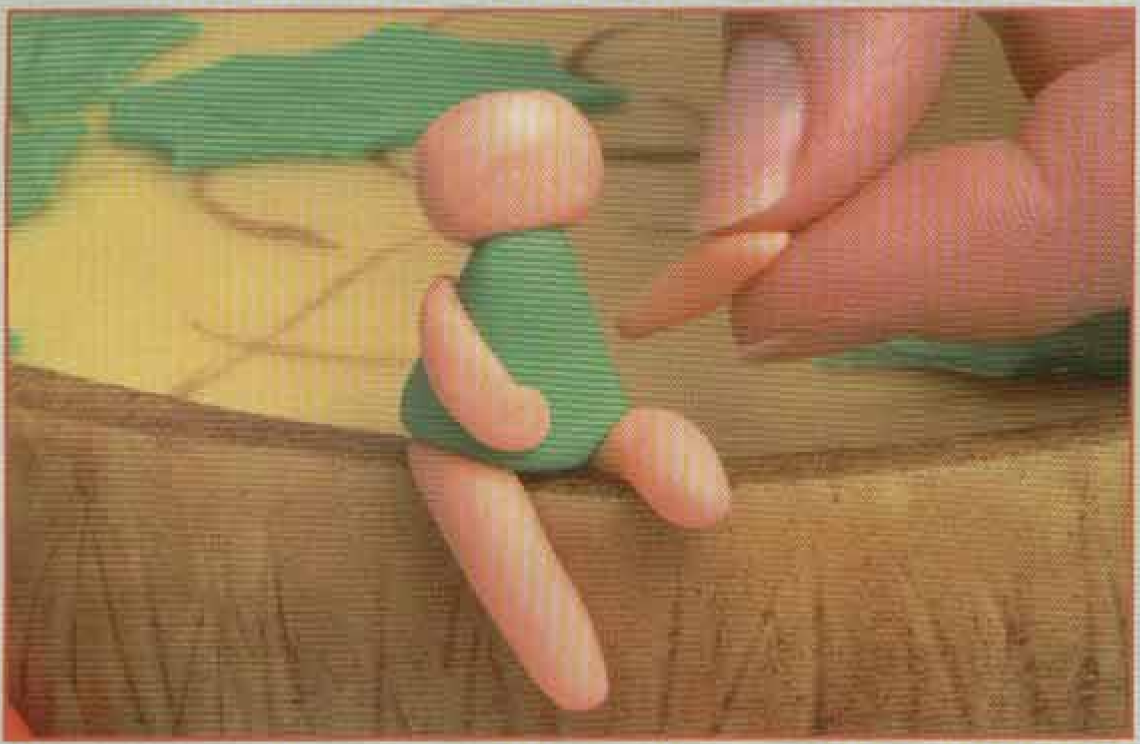


10 Press a few veins into the top of the leaf with the back of your knife. Press one long central vein and two or three smaller ones branching off. Make about 12 leaves and stick around the cake.

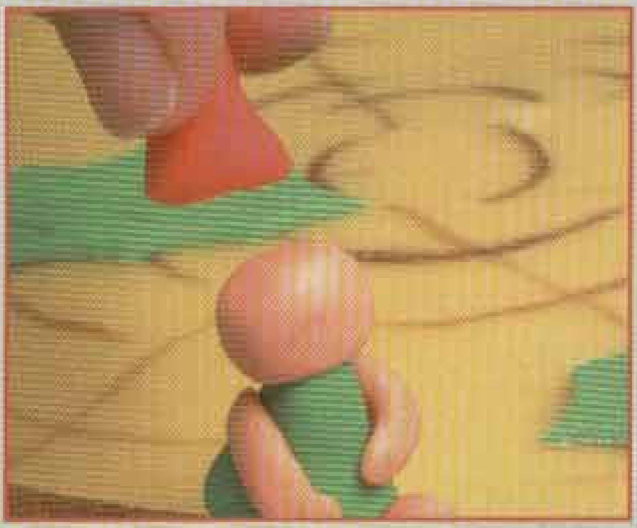
11 To make a toadstool, roll 10g ($^{1}/_{3}$oz) white sugarpaste into a sausage shape. Make a thick 10g ($^{1}/_{3}$oz) red sugarpaste disc shape and stick on top. Decorate with a few flattened white sugarpaste balls. Make 6 toadstools.

12 To make a fairy, first roll a tiny lump of flesh coloured sugarpaste into a thin string for her legs. Bend it into a horseshoe shape and stick in position on the cake.

13 Make a 5g ($^{1}/_{8}$oz) green sugarpaste cone and stick it on top of her legs.

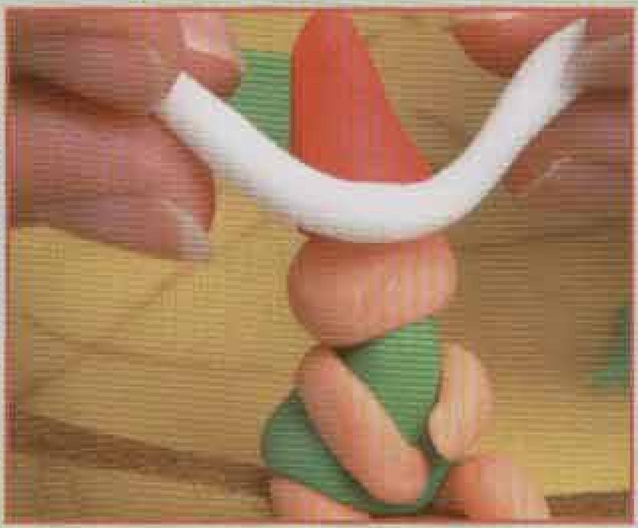


14 Make a tiny flesh ball for her head and two tiny flesh coloured strings for her arms and stick them onto the body.



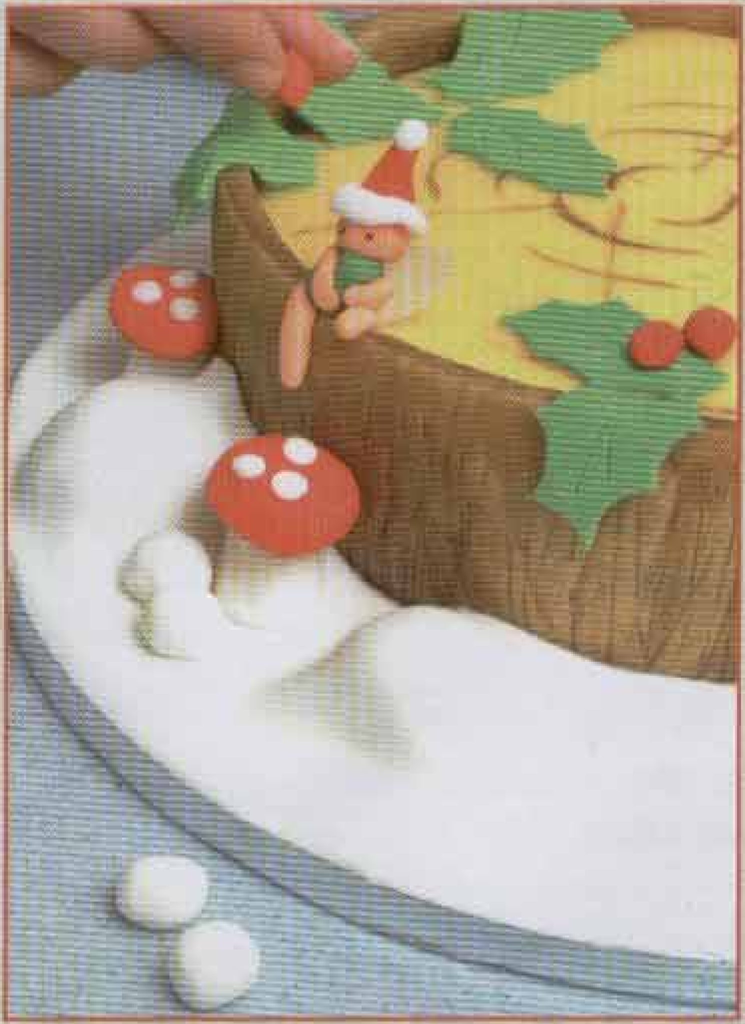
15 Make a tiny red icing triangle for her hat and stick on top of her head.

16 Stick a tiny white sugarpaste string around the base of her hat to make the trim and a tiny white ball on the point.

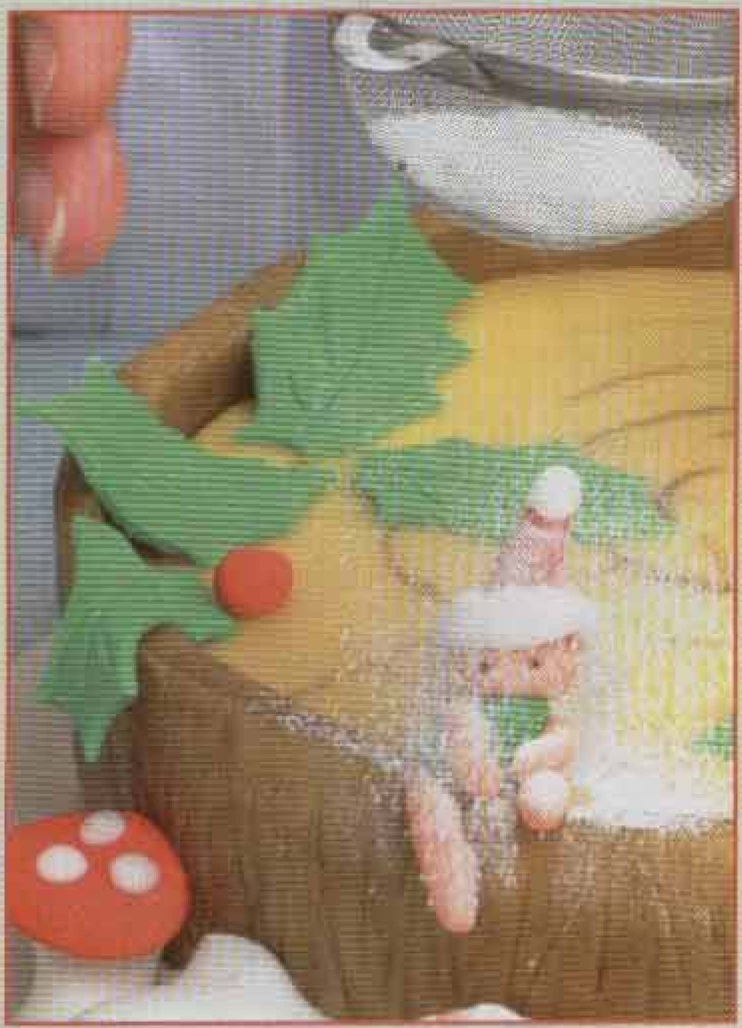


17 Use a cocktail dipped in black food colour to make tiny dots for eyes.

18 Cut a tiny heart shape out of rice paper for her wings and gently press them into her back. Use a tiny dab of water if they won't stick but not too much or they'll dissolve!



19 Roll the leftover red sugarpaste into balls for berries and stick amongst the holly. Roll the leftover white sugarpaste into snowballs and stick around the board.

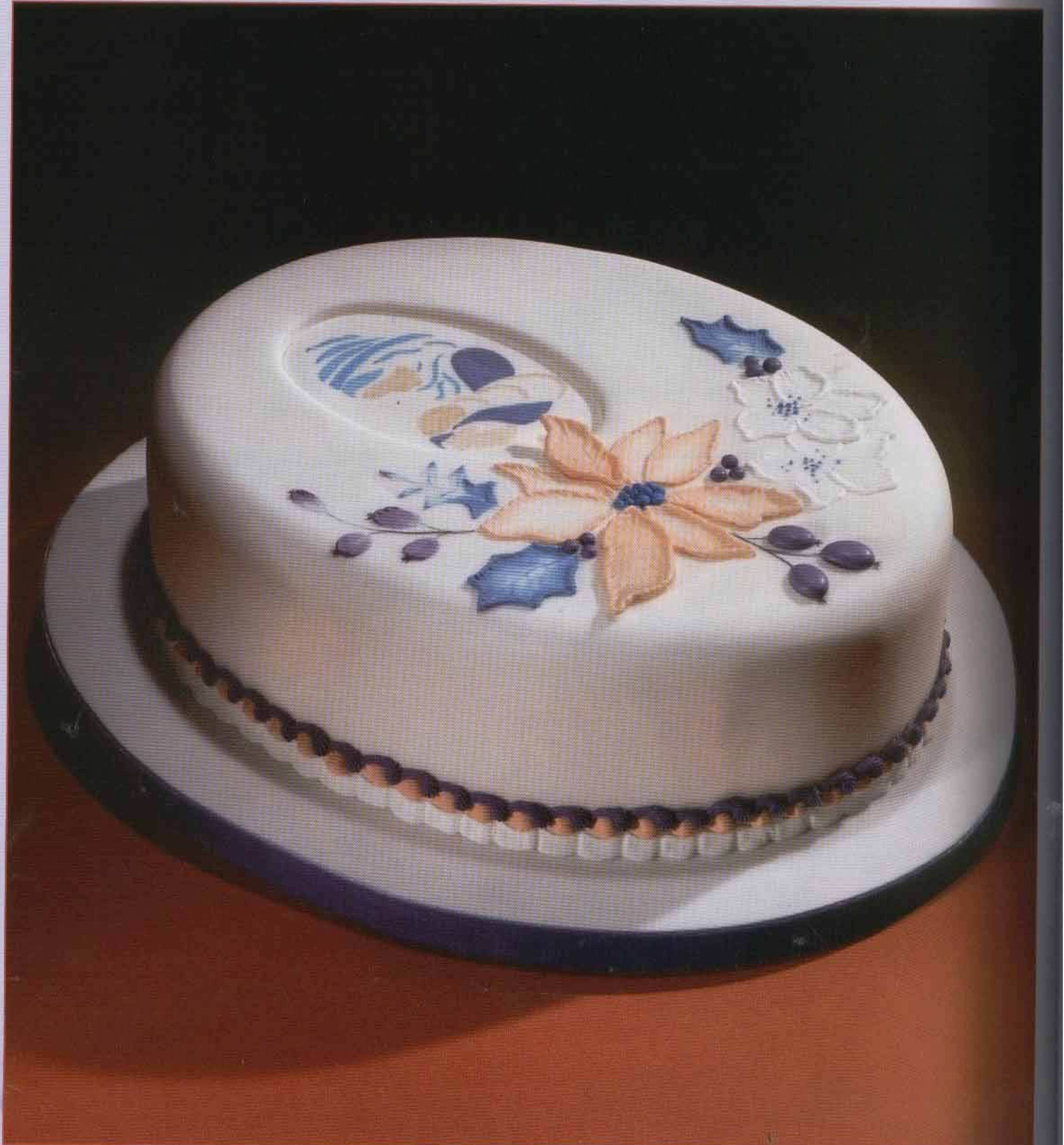


20 When you are happy with your arrangement, place a heaped teaspoon of icing sugar in a tea strainer and gently sift over the cake to give the scene a delicate smattering of snow.

Cake

DIFFICULTY RATING

Royal Icing Us



es for Beginners
PART 12

Brush Embroidery

Brush Embroidery is amongst the most attractive types of decoration for a cake. Mainly used on sugarpaste or pastillage, it can also be worked on royal icing, where great care needs to be taken not to dissolve the surface with the damp brush. Our cake this month uses two methods, one directly on to the surface of the cake, and one worked separately and applied when it is dry, known as free standing brush embroidery. I hope you enjoy this beautiful technique.

The design can be transferred on to the cake by tracing, or by impression using a piped outline on perspex. Here we are using the tracing method, it should be traced very lightly and if you intend to pipe only part of the outline do not complete the lines.

Nadene Hurst

YOU WILL NEED

- oval cake 20 x 25cm (8 x 10in)
- oval cake board 28 x 33cm (11 x13in)
- marzipan 1kg (2lb)
- sugarpaste 1.25kg (2$^{1}/_{2}$lb)
- royal icing 1kg (2lb)
- oval plaque 6.5 x 10cm (2$^{3}/_{4}$ x 4in)
- piping gel
- titanium dioxide powder
- colours blue, violet, flesh
- piping tubes number 1, 2, 42, 44 and 58 (petal)

1 Prepare your icing by paddling it first, then add a small amount of piping gel which will slow down the drying process, enabling you to work on the brush process for longer. The consistency should be soft piping.

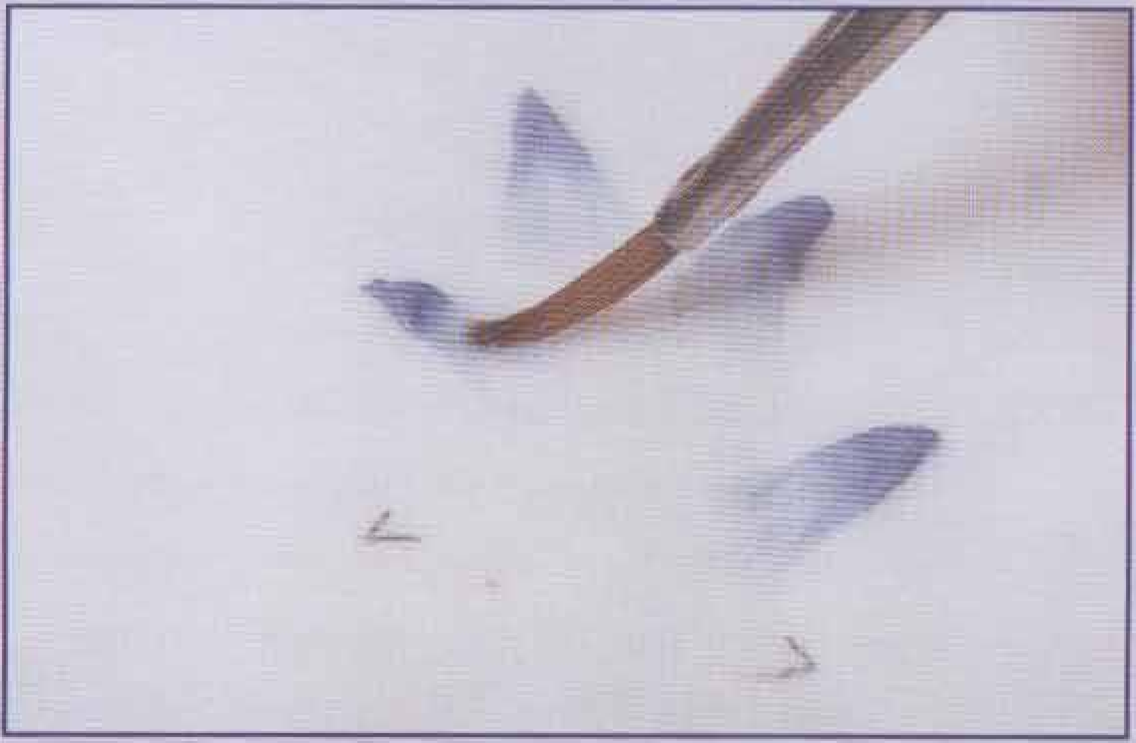
2 Complete outlines are not always necessary; gaps create a feeling of distance. For this effect trace only the tips of the leaf, start at the top, pipe a bulb with a number 1 tube pull it to a point outwards as you finish to make the point on the holly.

CakeTips

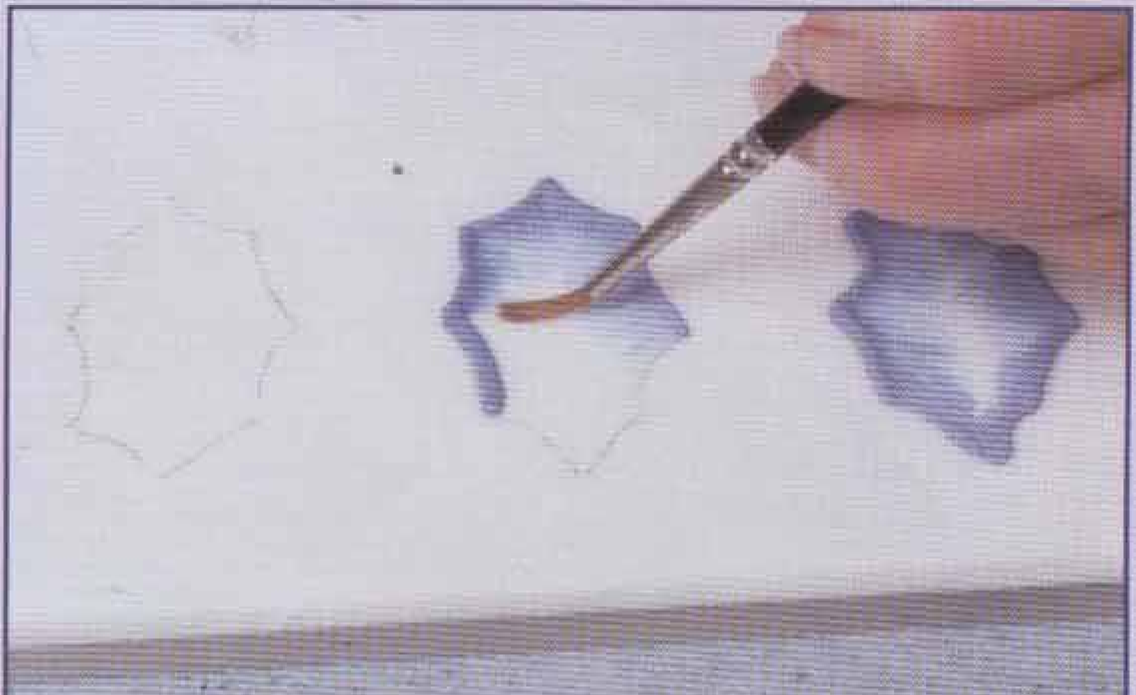
CRAFT & DECORATION

Any tracing lines that still show when the work is completed can be removed with a putty rubber or a scalpel.

To prepare your brush for use dip in water and flatten the bristles with a damp cloth.



3 Use a slightly damp paintbrush pull the inside edge of the icing downwards inside the leaf and brush it towards the centre until it disappears. Repeat on each point, work only one at a time as the icing will dry quickly. Imagine a centre vein and brush in that direction.

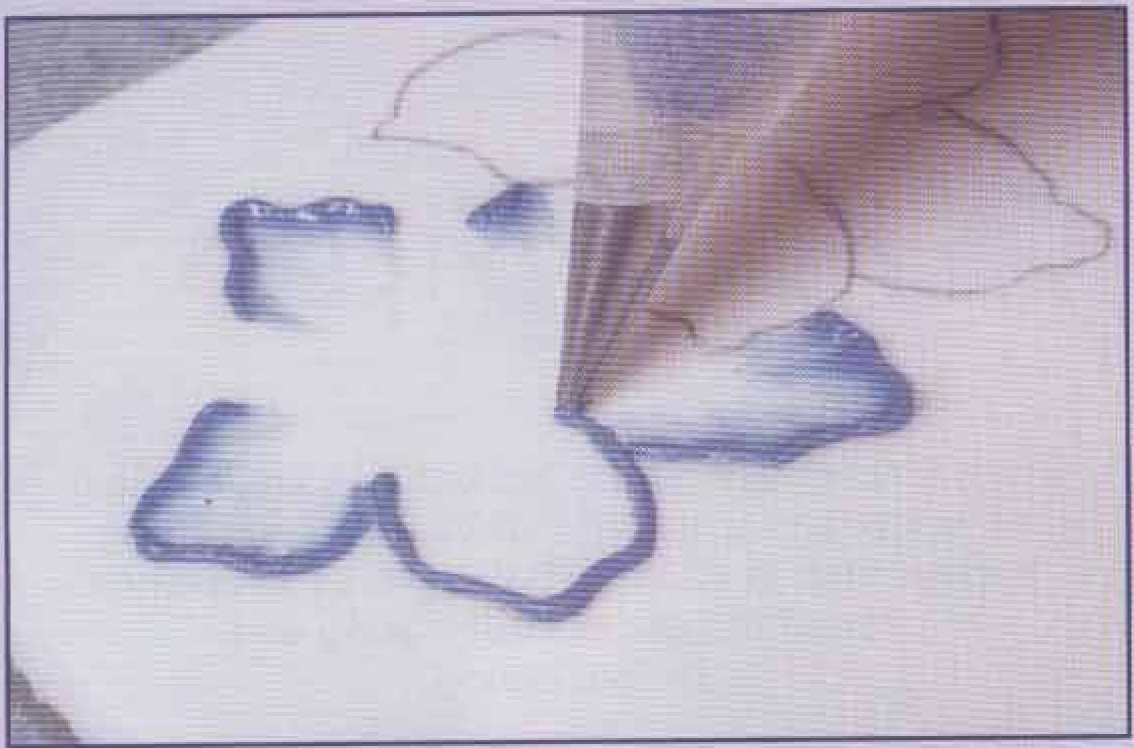


4 For a bolder leaf, outline the shape and brush inwards and down towards the point where they are attached to a stem. Brush from the inside edge of the piped line, not the top. Until you have built up some speed pipe only one part of the outline at a time.

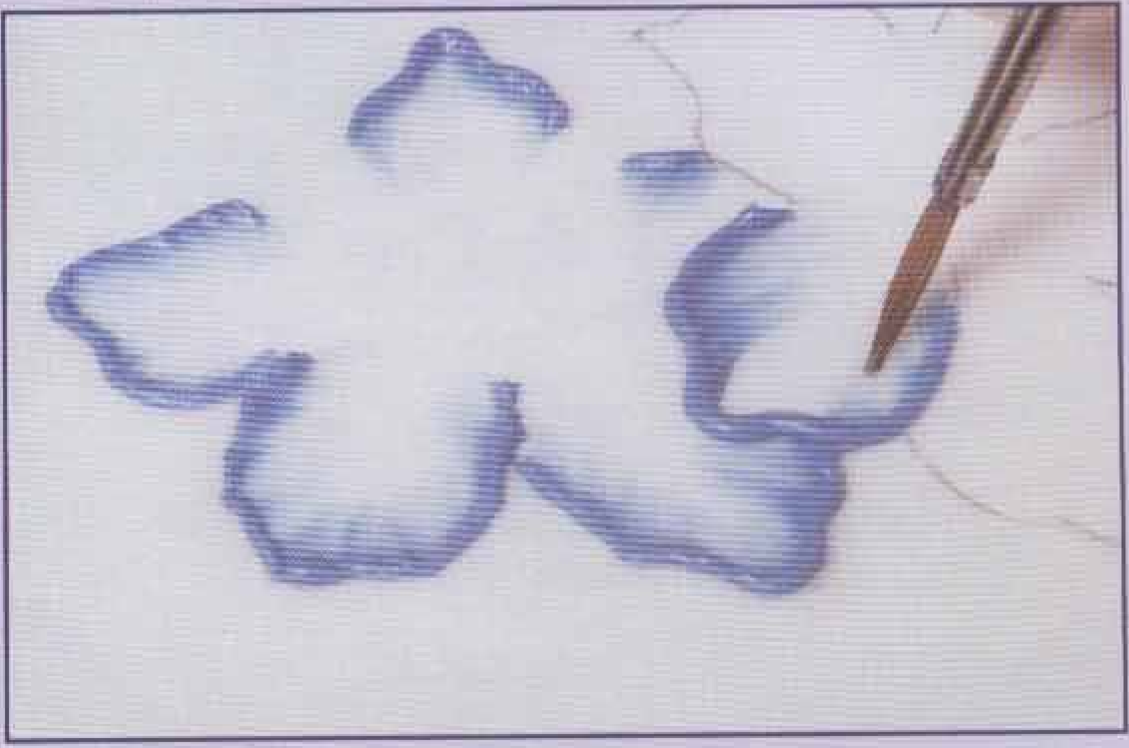
CakeTip

CRAFT & DECORATION

Veining can be added by scratch piping when the leaf is dry, or piped whilst the background is wet and blended in. Very fine lines can be painted on.



5 As with leaves, petals can be made to look daintier and distant by piping shorter and thinner lines before brushing. Pipe across the top of the background petal use a number 2 tube, with a damp paintbrush gently brush the icing from underneath to half way down the petal.

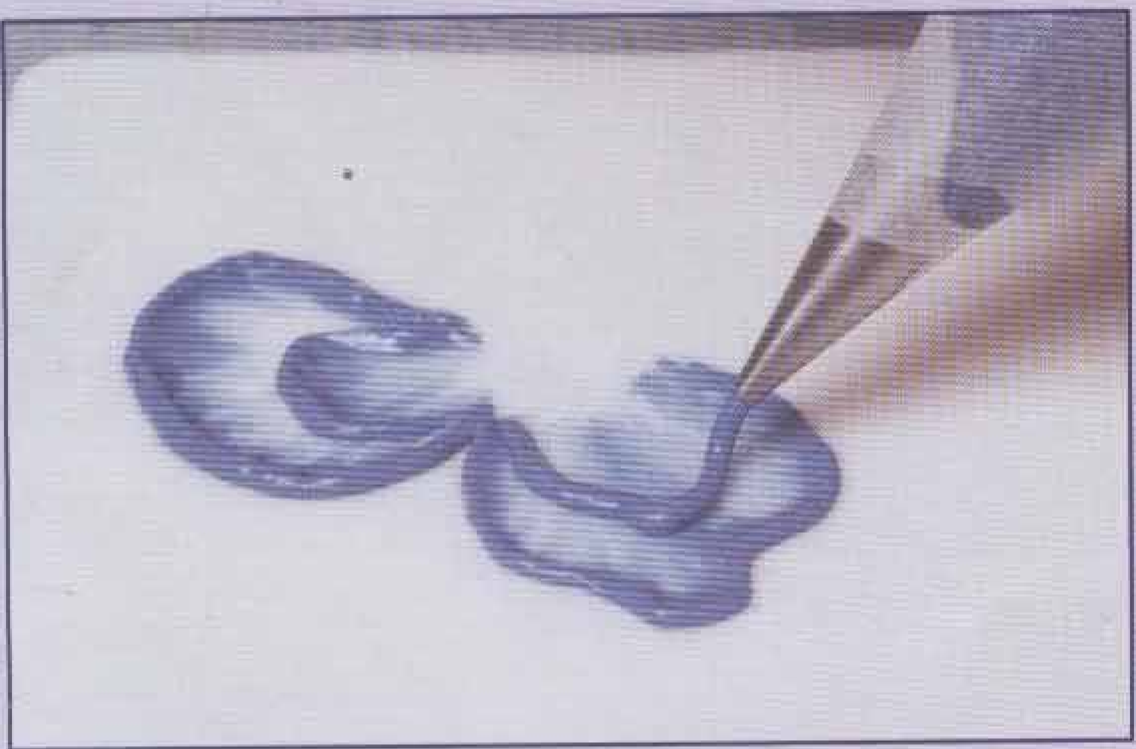


6 To make the next petal appear closer to you pipe nearly all the way round the petal, put extra pressure at the top. Brush as before towards the base, fading out completely as you finish.

Cake Tip

For Christmas roses add an extra bulb of icing on the point at the top of the petal.

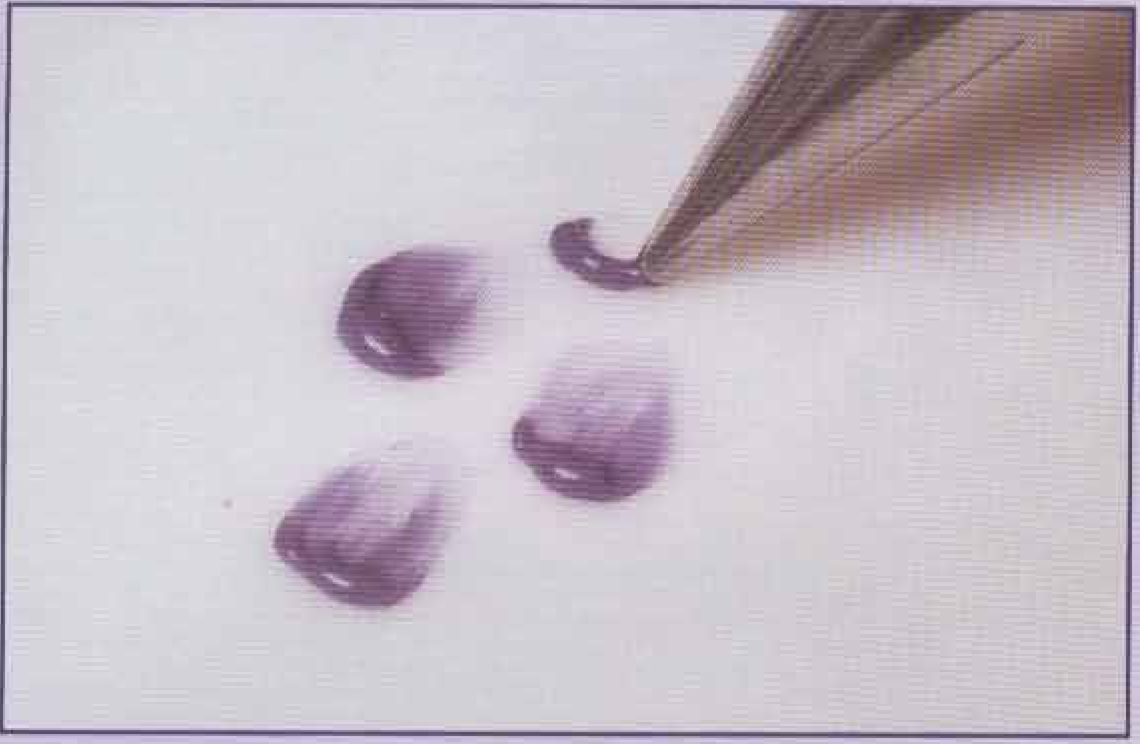
7 On the petal closest to you pressure pipe all the way round the petal, with extra pressure across the top. Brush all the way round, from inside of the piping and fade it away at the centre of the flower.



8 When the first line of brushing is dry, a second petal can be added inside to create a double layer. Pipe an outline over the original petals and brush as before.

Cake Tip

The icing you use for brushing should come from inside the piped line. When it is finished the outline should remain smooth, with no brush marks on the top.

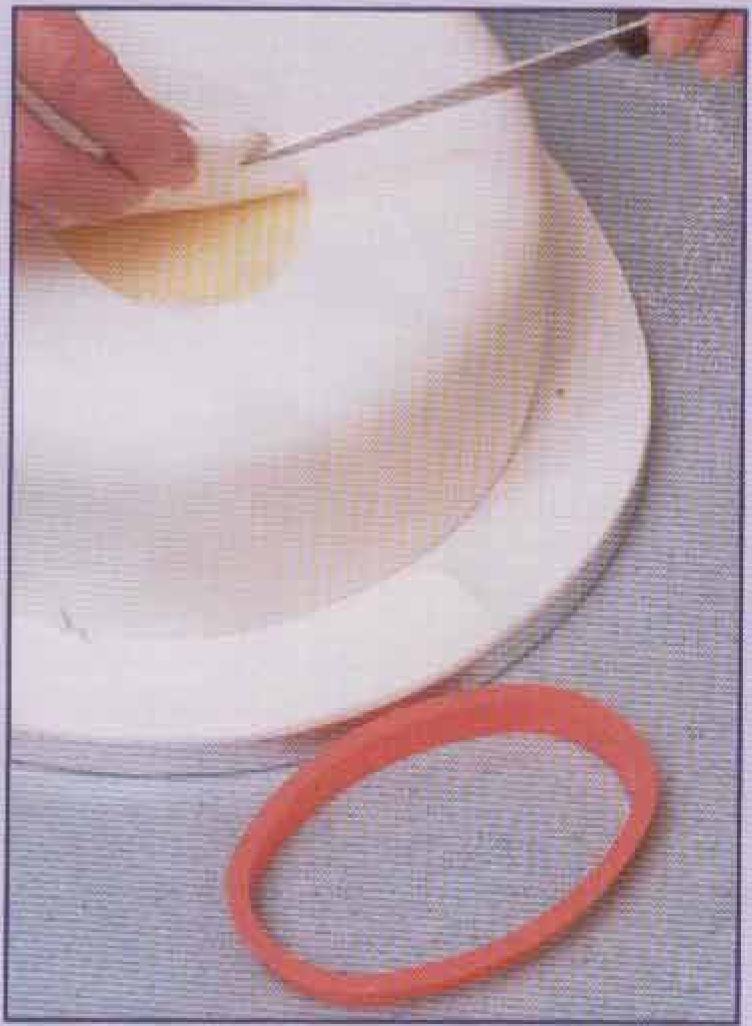


9 Very small petals or berries can be created by piping a short curved line and brush down to the stem. Pipe the berries in the foreground with solid bulbs to create a feeling of perspective.

CakeTip
CRAFT & DECORATION

Brush Embroidery can be worked in a single colour or white, and is very attractive on a contrasting background. In addition halos can be airbrushed round the edges after tracing and before piping.

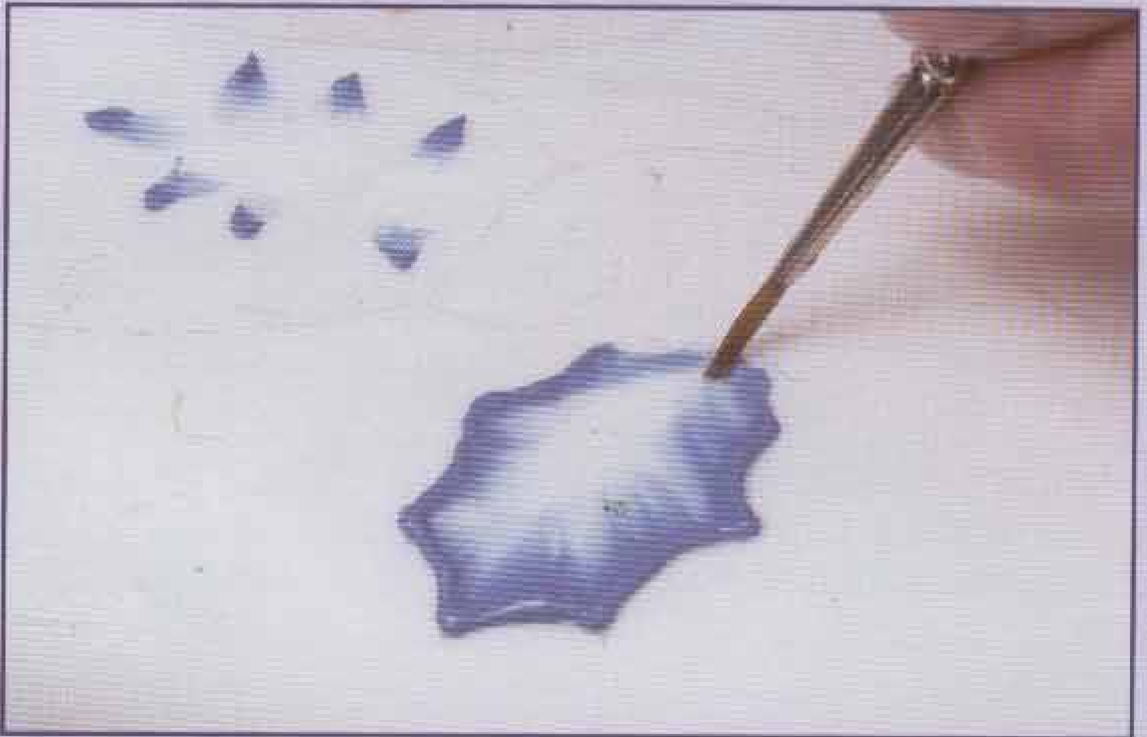
10 Marzipan the cake, then cover the cake and the board in white sugarpaste. Whilst the icing is soft cut out an oval in the position shown and remove the inside paste. Leave to dry thoroughly.



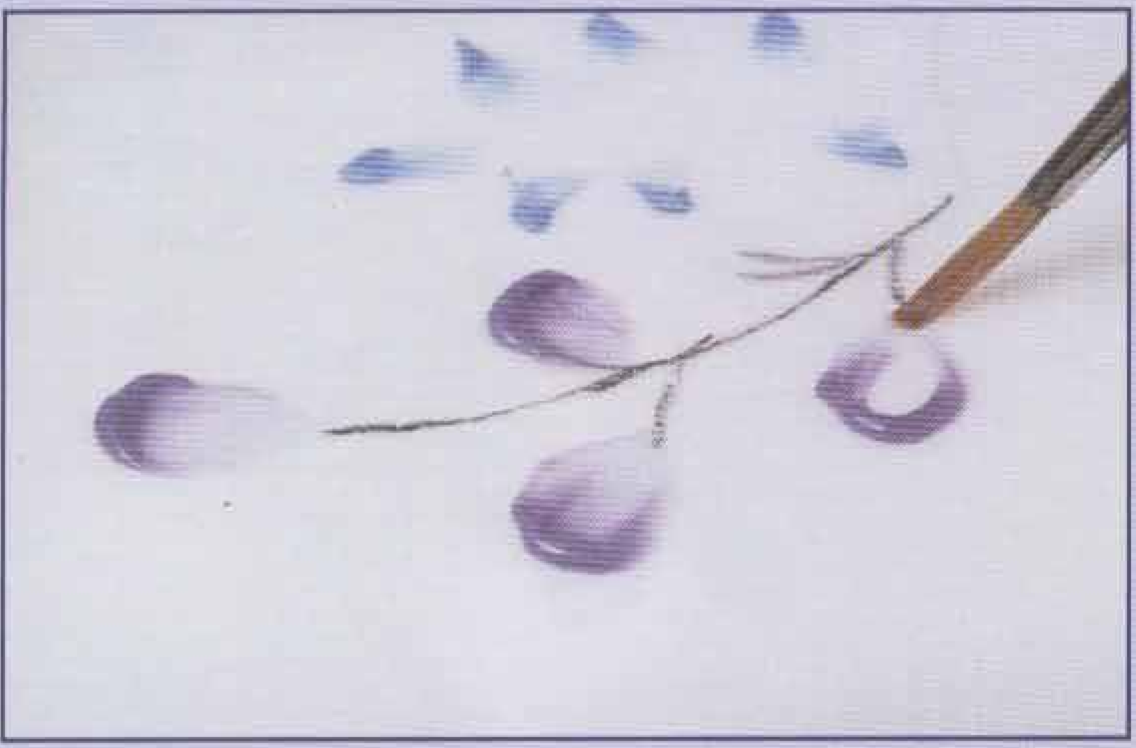
11 Cut out an oval plaque with the same cutter using flower paste or pastillage and allow to dry. Lightly trace the design on to the plaque, and fill in the sections with the relevant colours. Use water and titanium dioxide (white) to mix the colours to the correct shade and consistency.

CakeTip
CRAFT & DECORATION

Keep the paint colours quite thin, and only use a small amount on the brush at a time or you will spoil the surface of the plaque. If the paint is too thick you will not get a smooth painted surface.



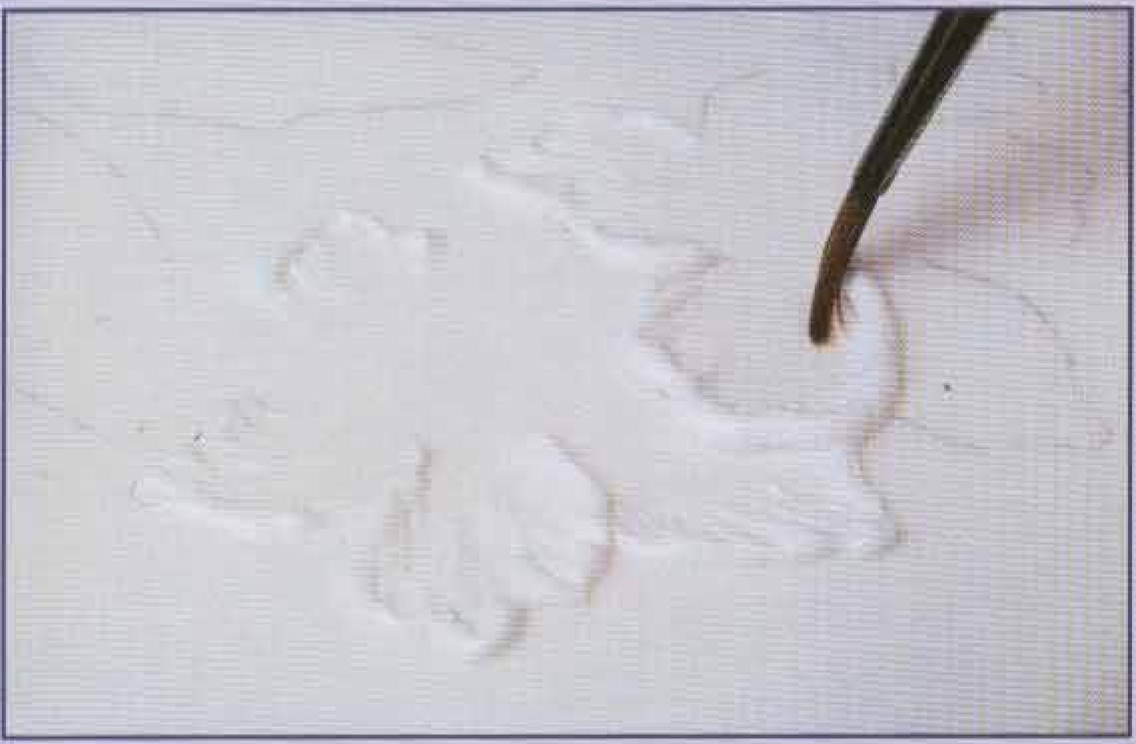
12 Start the embroidery in the background, work just the tips of the leaf (1) in blue to make them appear in the distance. Finish leaves (2) in a bolder style, gradually work all round the leaf.



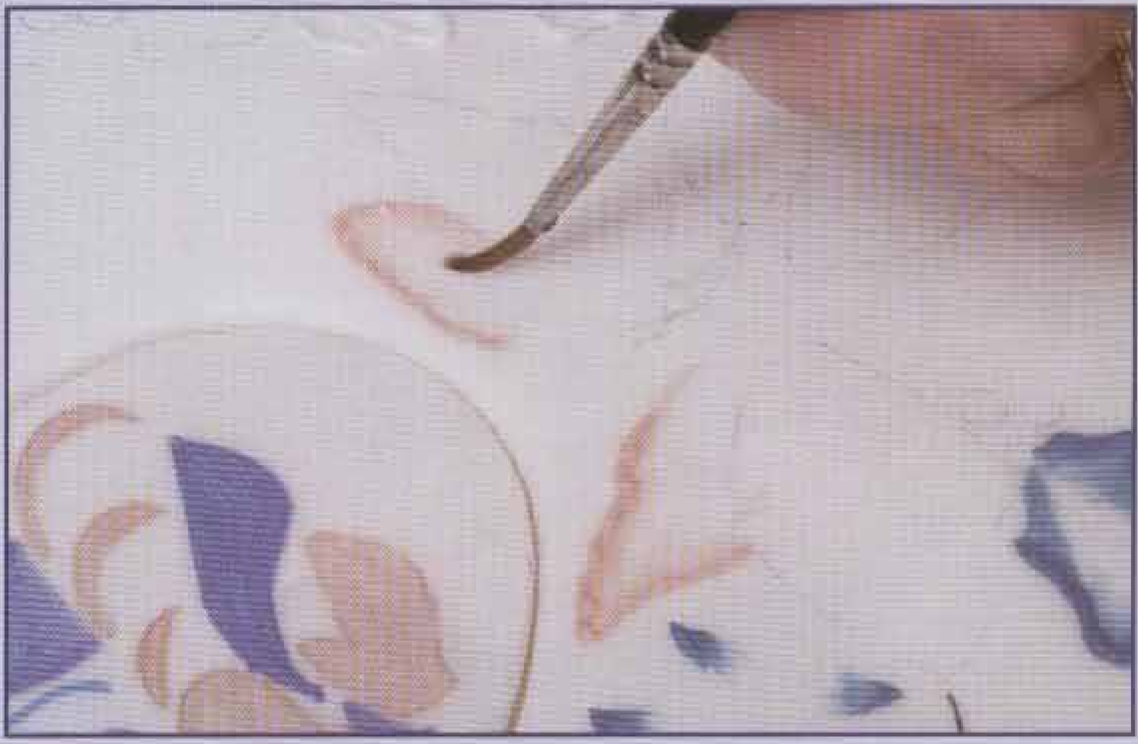
13 Pipe the spray of rose hips (3) with a line of icing over the top, work down the spray with a thicker line each time for a bolder effect. Each time brush the icing towards the stem.

CakeTip

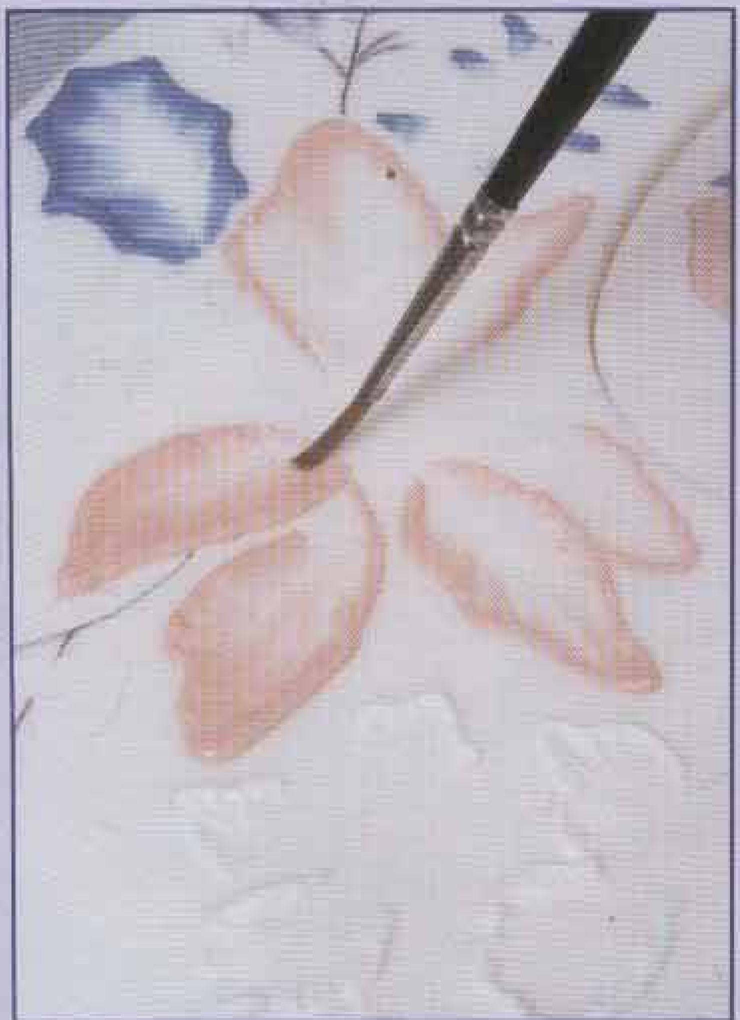
Paint the stems and the tufts at the tips of the rose hips in black.



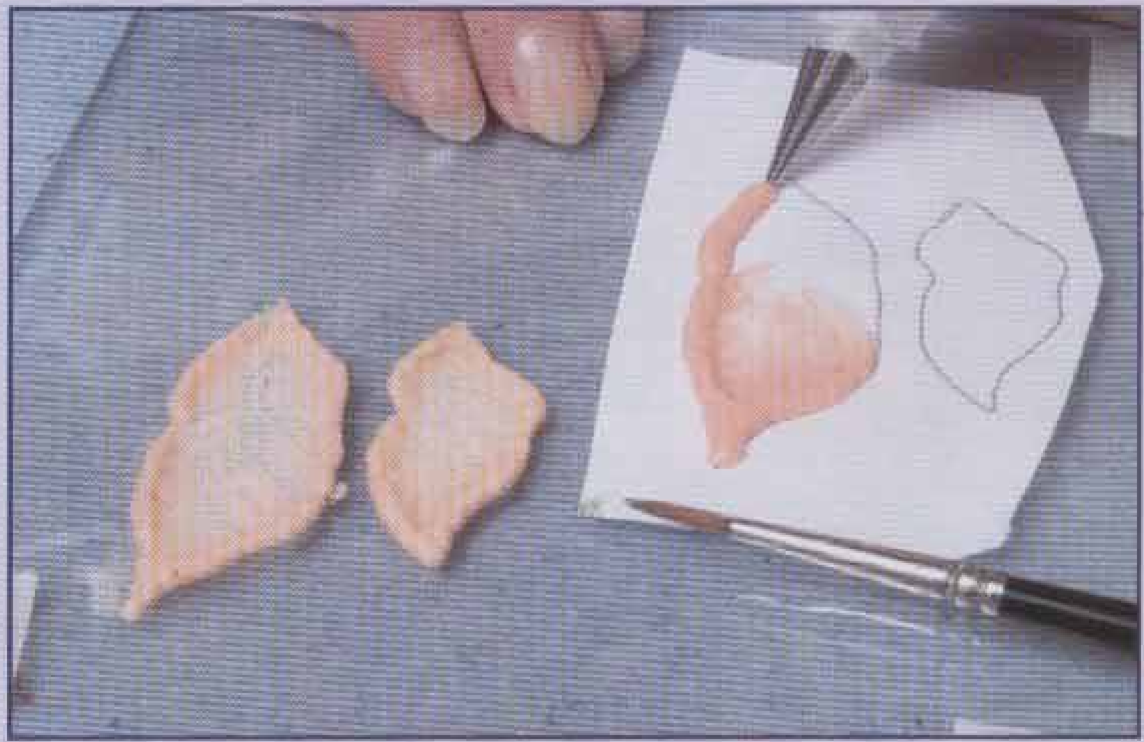
14 Follow the instructions for petals pipe the Christmas rose (4) keep the back petals much daintier than the front. Overlap it with the second flower (5) use a bolder technique.



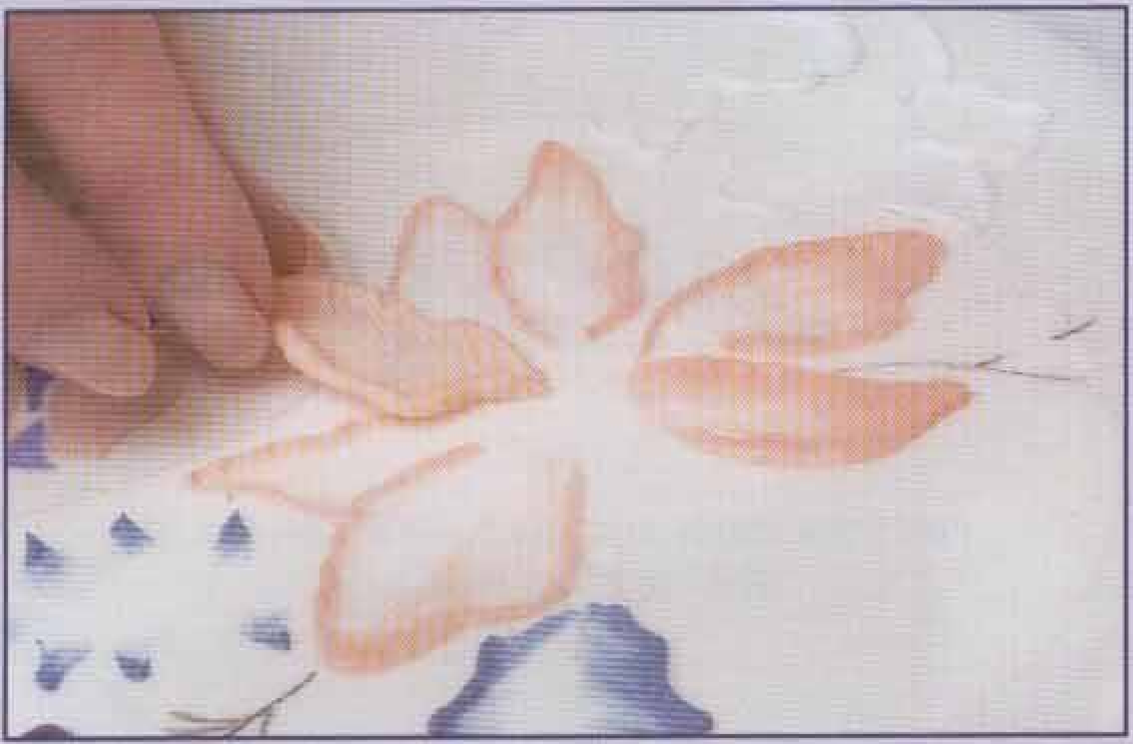
15 The petals of the poinsettia are actually leaves, so work them as such. Finish two petals (6) lightly.



16 Next the two petals (7) a little heavier. Lastly two petals (8) boldly, as these are in the front.



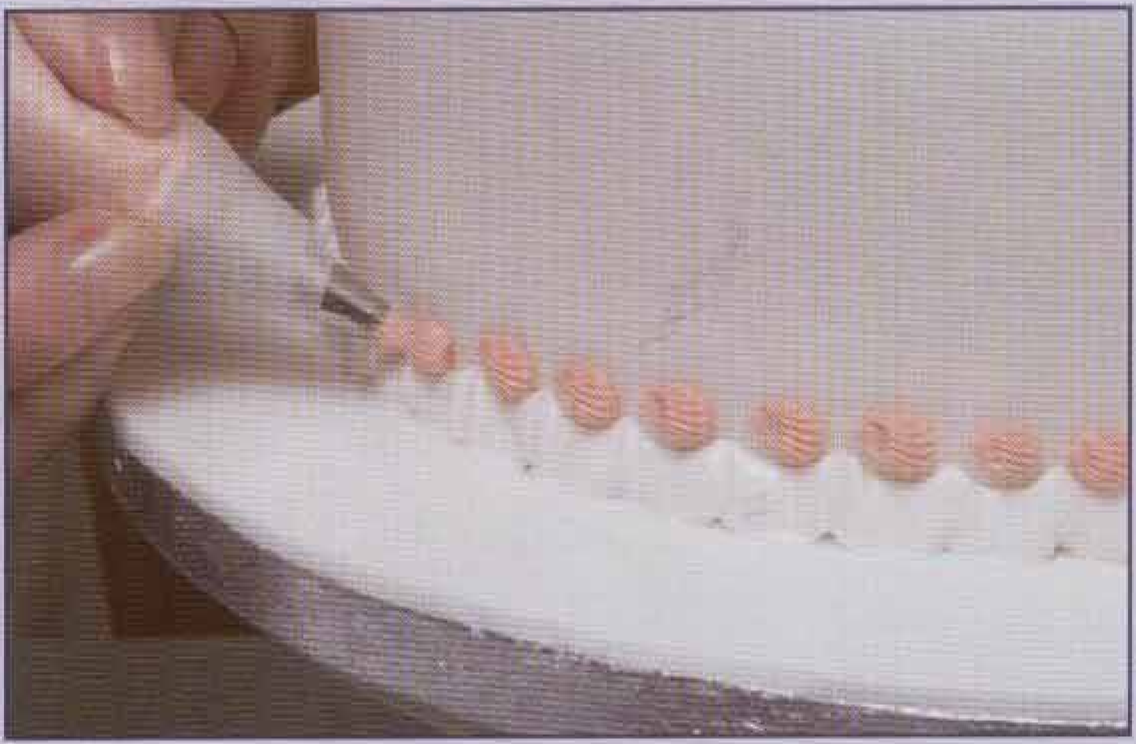
17 Make the petals marked (9) on a separate piece of run-out film. Do not add any piping gel to the icing or they will not dry enough to lift them. Work with very bold lines, make sure that the brushed icing meets in the centre and the colour is visible.



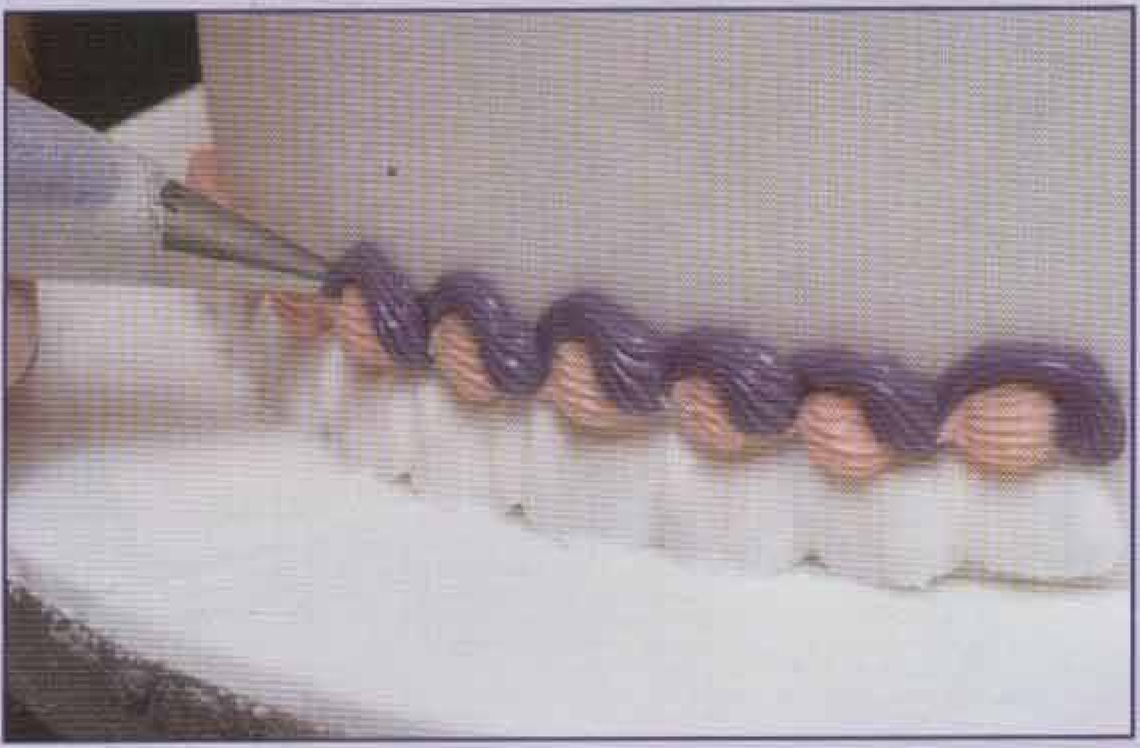
18 When they are completely dry remove them from the film. Slide a thin palette knife underneath. Attach to the design with bulbs of icing. The smaller one will overlap the plaque.

19 Pipe the remaining hips and berries with soft bulbs and apply direct heat for a good shine. Finish off with piped bulbs and dots in the centre of the flowers and paint on the centre veins of the leaves and the stems and tufts at the top of the hips.

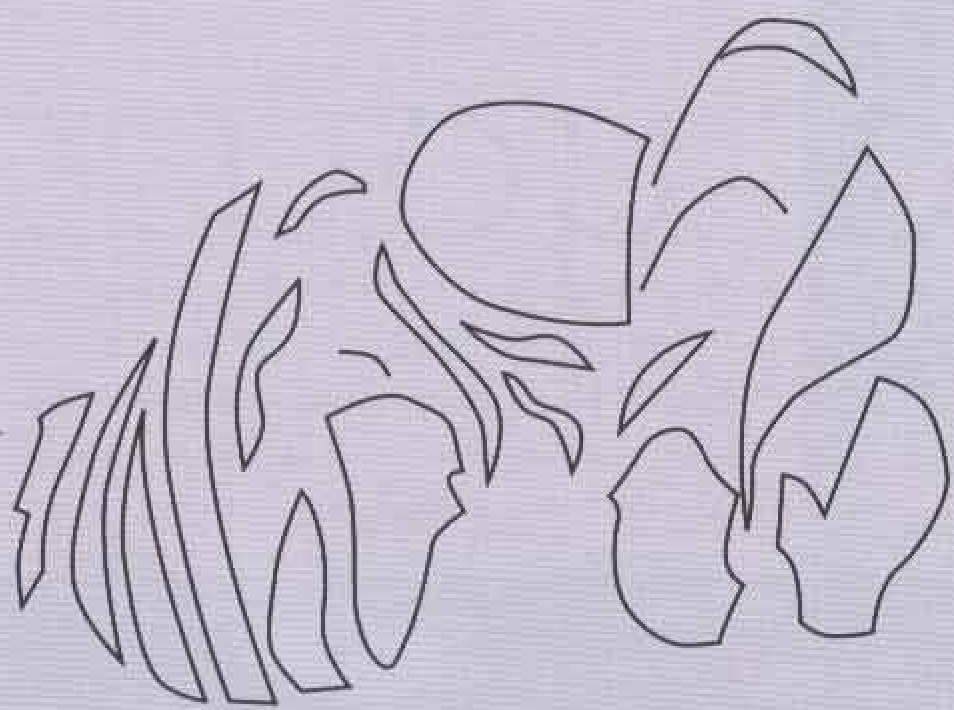
20 Use a petal tube number 58 pipe round the base. Hold the tube with the widest part at the top, start slightly above the base and as you pipe drop the tube downwards then back up to form a semicircle. Each one should be about 1cm ($^1/_2$in) in length.

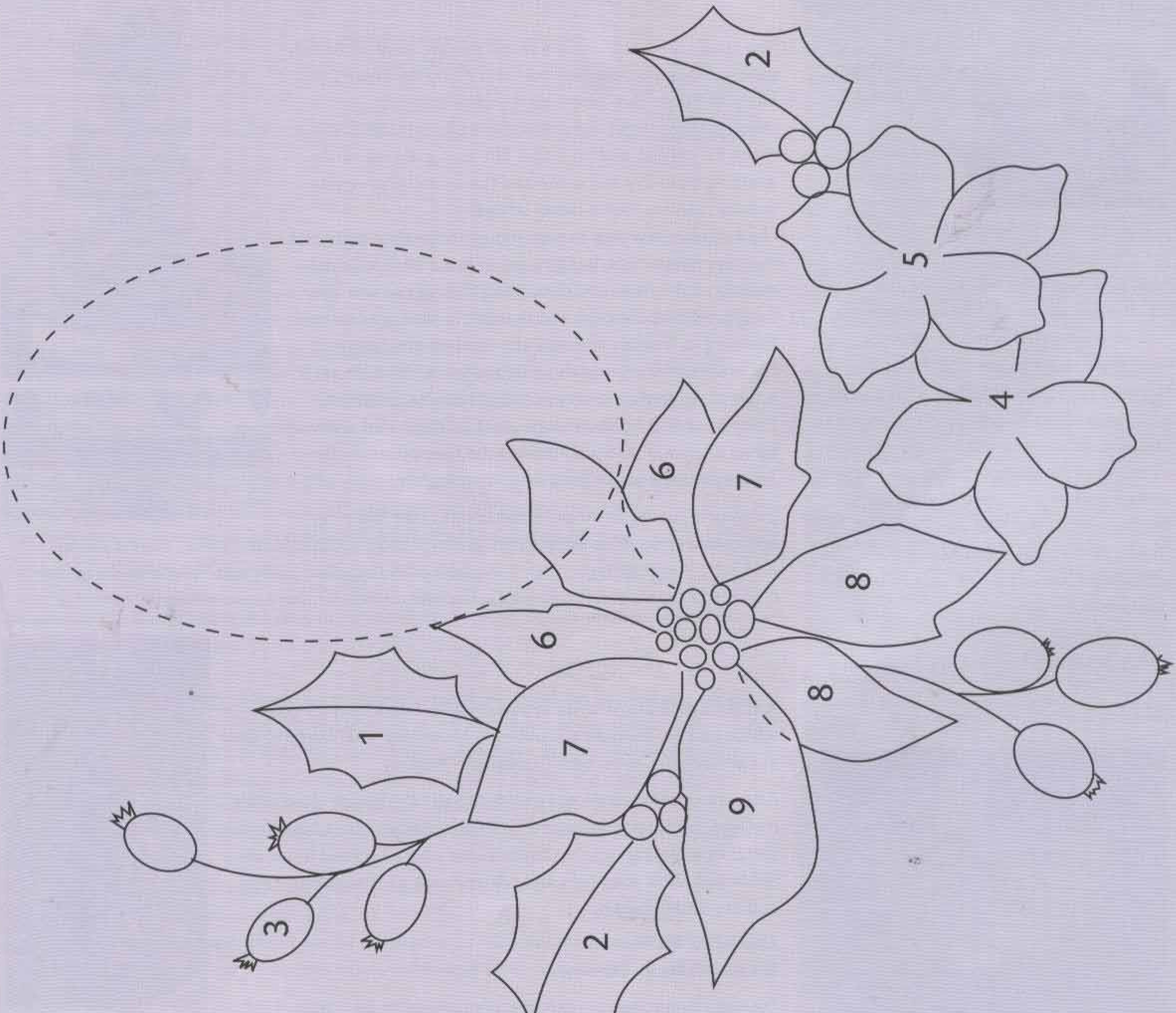


21 With a number 44 tube pipe individual shells in flesh colour above each scoop of the frill.



22 Finish with small 'C' scrolls over the top of each shell in violet, use a number 42 piping tube.

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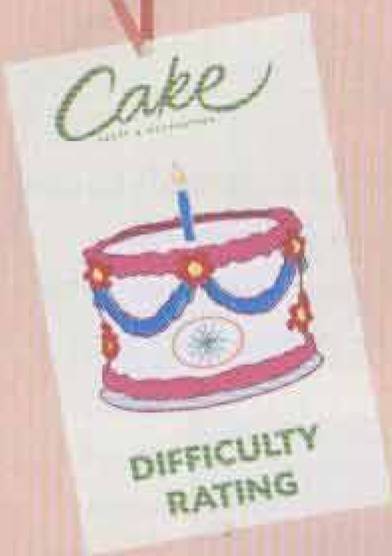


little fingers

Ruth Wyld & Ashley

Christmas Table Settings

Ashley has been making festive table decorations for the family with a sparkling snowy feel. These decorations could also be used for any party celebration around December and January. By adapting the colours and the motifs, the basic techniques could be used all year round also. If the children get carried away they could add motifs to the napkins too.

YOU WILL NEED

- modelling paste 45g ($1^1/_2$oz) per place setting
- egg white
- piping jelly
- egg white
- sprinkles white sparkling sugar (Wilton/PME) or caster sugar
- paste colour red extra, black, tangerine, ice blue, paprika/skintone (Sugarflair)
- black food pen
- edible lustre spray pearl (Wilton/PME)
- stemtex white, red
- card template 8 x 21cm ($3^1/_4$ x $8^1/_4$in) long
- ruler
- pastry cutter
- rolling pin
- fine scissors
- cocktail stick
- paintbrushes
- white wire 4 x 24 gauge cut into 3 (snowballs per setting)
- white wire 2 x 24 gauge cut in half (icicles per setting)
- wine glass

TO MAKE THE NAPKIN RING

1 Roll out a thin sheet of modelling paste. Use a ruler and cut out a strip 4 x 14cm ($1^1/_2$ x $5^1/_2$in). Mark with a cocktail stick along each side to indent or cut a wavy edge.

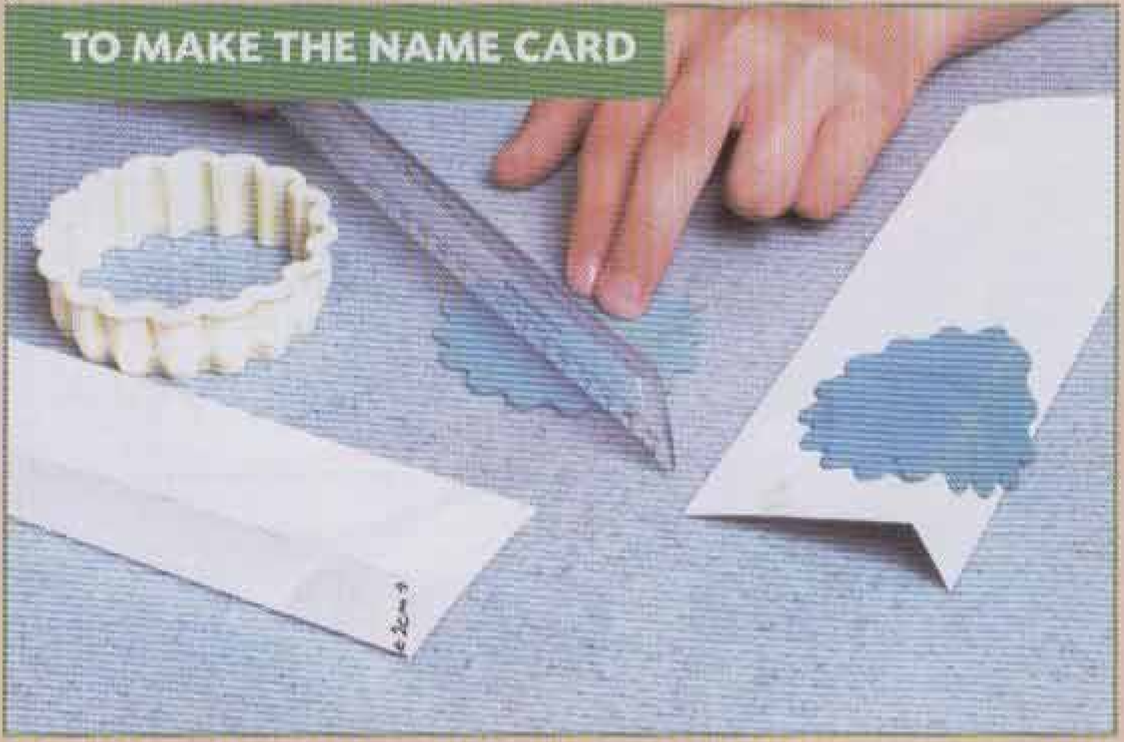
2 Paint egg white on one end and wrap in a circle pressing the ends together to join neatly. Place a rolled up piece of paper 14 x 6cm ($5^1/_2$ x $2^1/_2$in) inside to support it and leave to dry overnight.

CakeTip

If you mark a line around the top of the cocktail stick with a food colour pen, each time you use it make sure the line is level with the edge of the paste, you will always get a level frill.

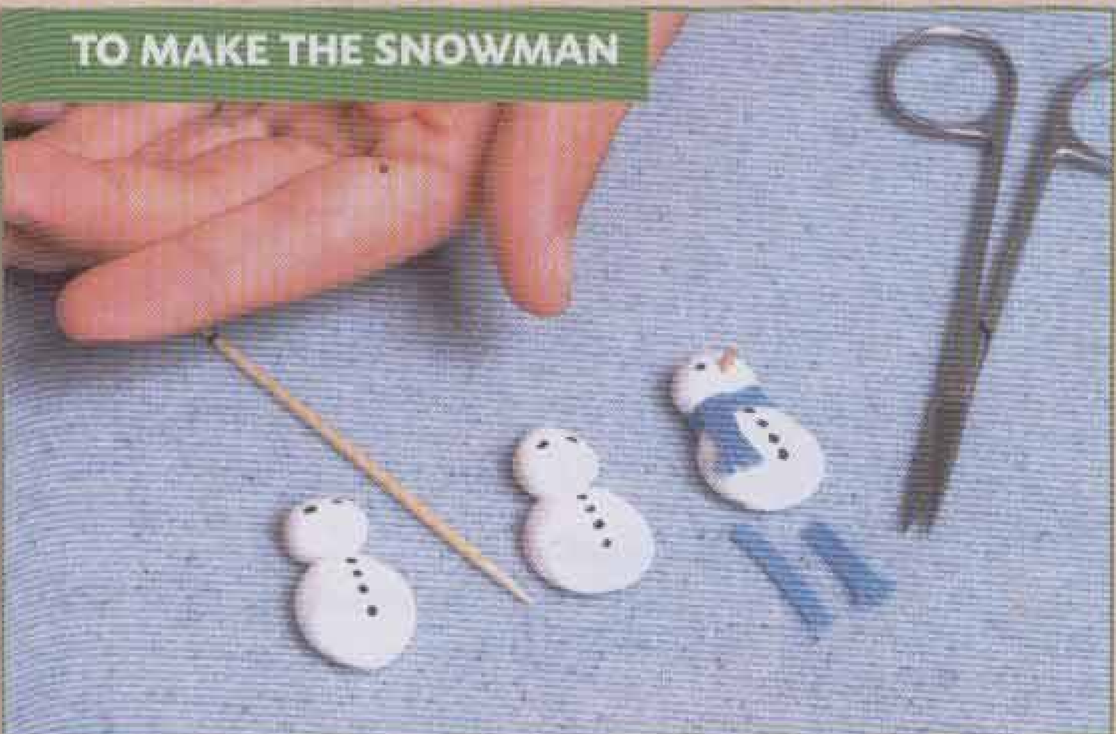
3 Paint one side of the napkin with piping jelly or egg white then dip the ring into the sugar crystals. Repeat on the other side and leave to set.

TO MAKE THE NAME CARD



4 Mark a line 2cm in from the long edge of the card template. Fold the card template against the ruler to make a former. Roll out and cut a circle of paste with the pastry cutter. Press a fold into the paste a third of the way across. Lay the paste over the former to dry. Glue sugar crystals to the edge.

TO MAKE THE SNOWMAN



5 Flatten two balls for the body and head. Mark two eyes and four buttons. Roll a tiny carrot of tangerine paste and glue in place. Cut two thin strips of blue paste and wrap one around the snowman's neck. Cut a frill on the other and glue on top.

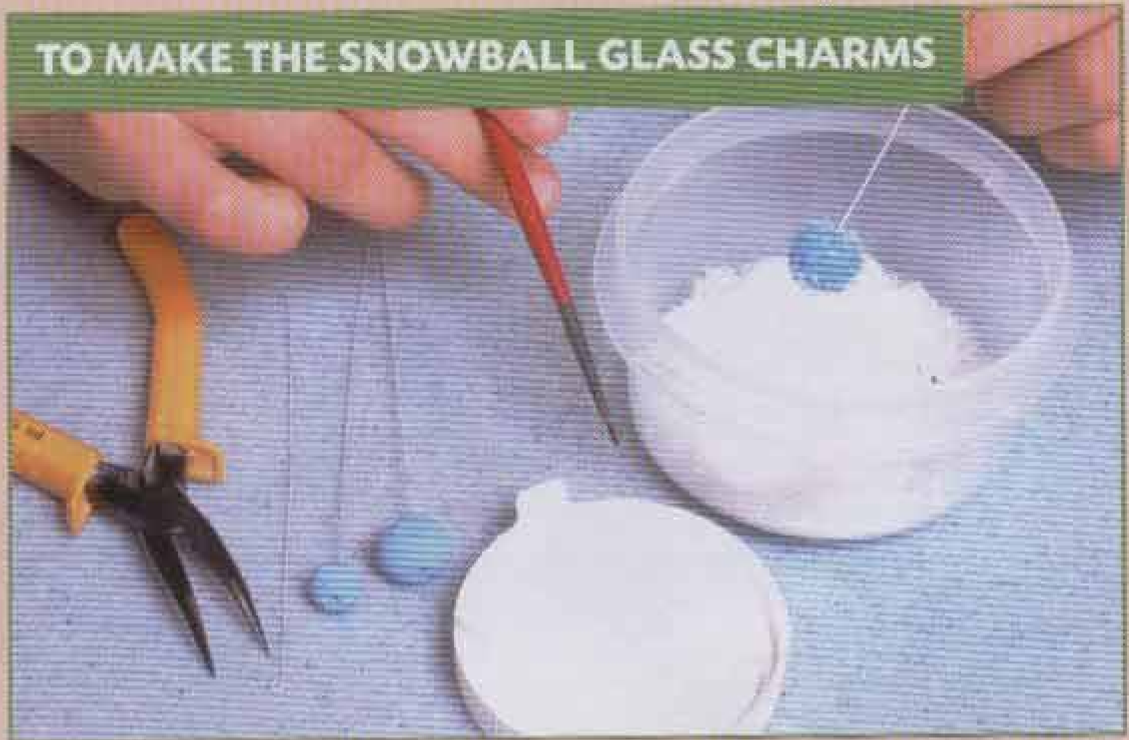
6 Glue the snowman in place on the card. Roll a small sausage and ball from black paste and place together. Flatten them to make a hat and attach to the snowman's head. A name can now be written on with food colour pen.

TO MAKE THE SANTA

7 Make a flat ball of flesh paste, glue on a ball for the nose and mark with a black pen for the eyes. Make a flat cone of red paste and glue to the head. Roll a sausage and ball of white paste, glue in place and texture.

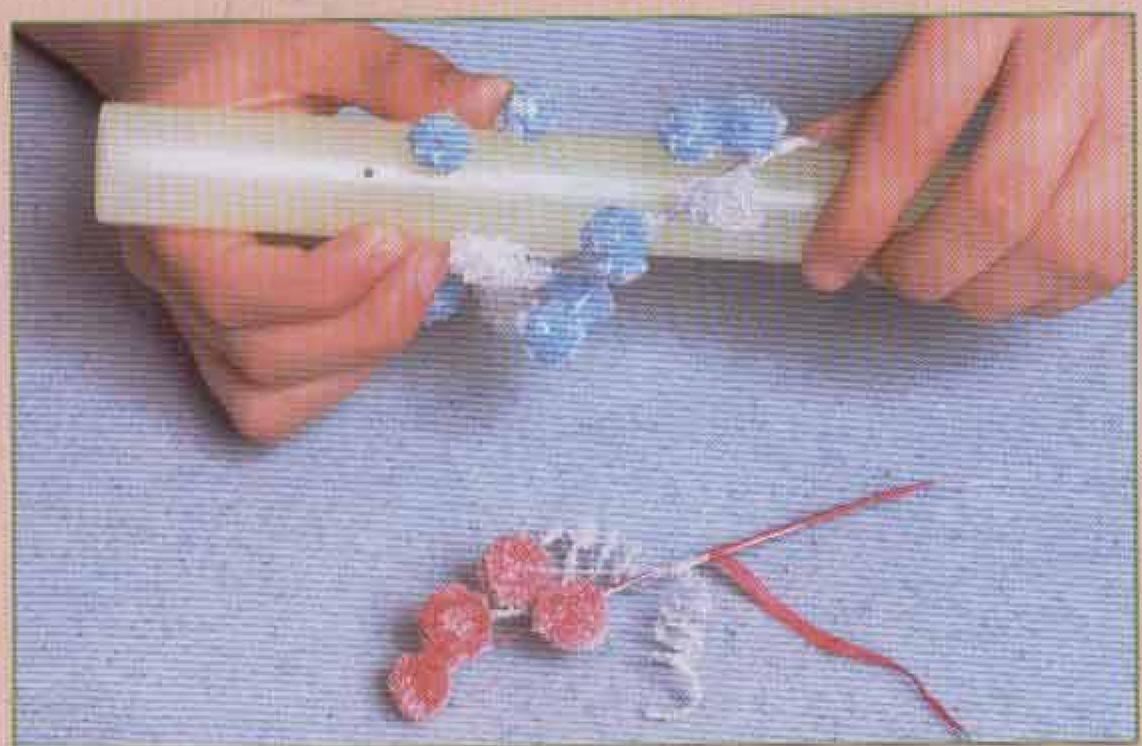
8 Make two small cones for the eyebrows and two for his moustache, curve and glue to the face. Make a flat triangle then pull the top corners up. Glue on the face for beard and hair. Glue the whole thing to the name card.

TO MAKE THE SNOWBALL GLASS CHARMS



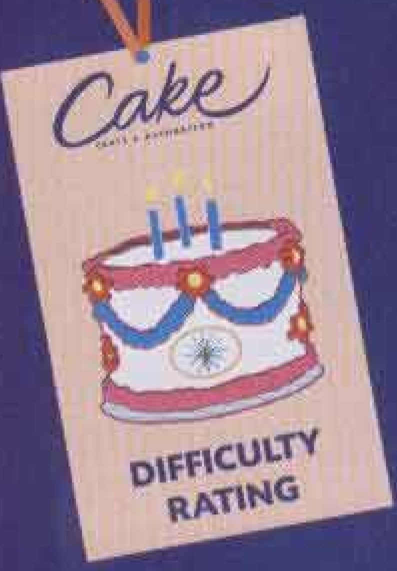
9 Hook the end of the 24g wires. Roll four balls of paste about the size of a large pea and pull the hook through. Repeat with eight smaller balls. Paint the balls with piping jelly and dip into the sugar crystals. Leave to set.

10 Curl four 24g wires around a paintbrush to make the icicles, leave one end straight to tape to the stem. Dip the wire into piping jelly, brush to remove the excess jelly. Dip into the crystals and leave to set.

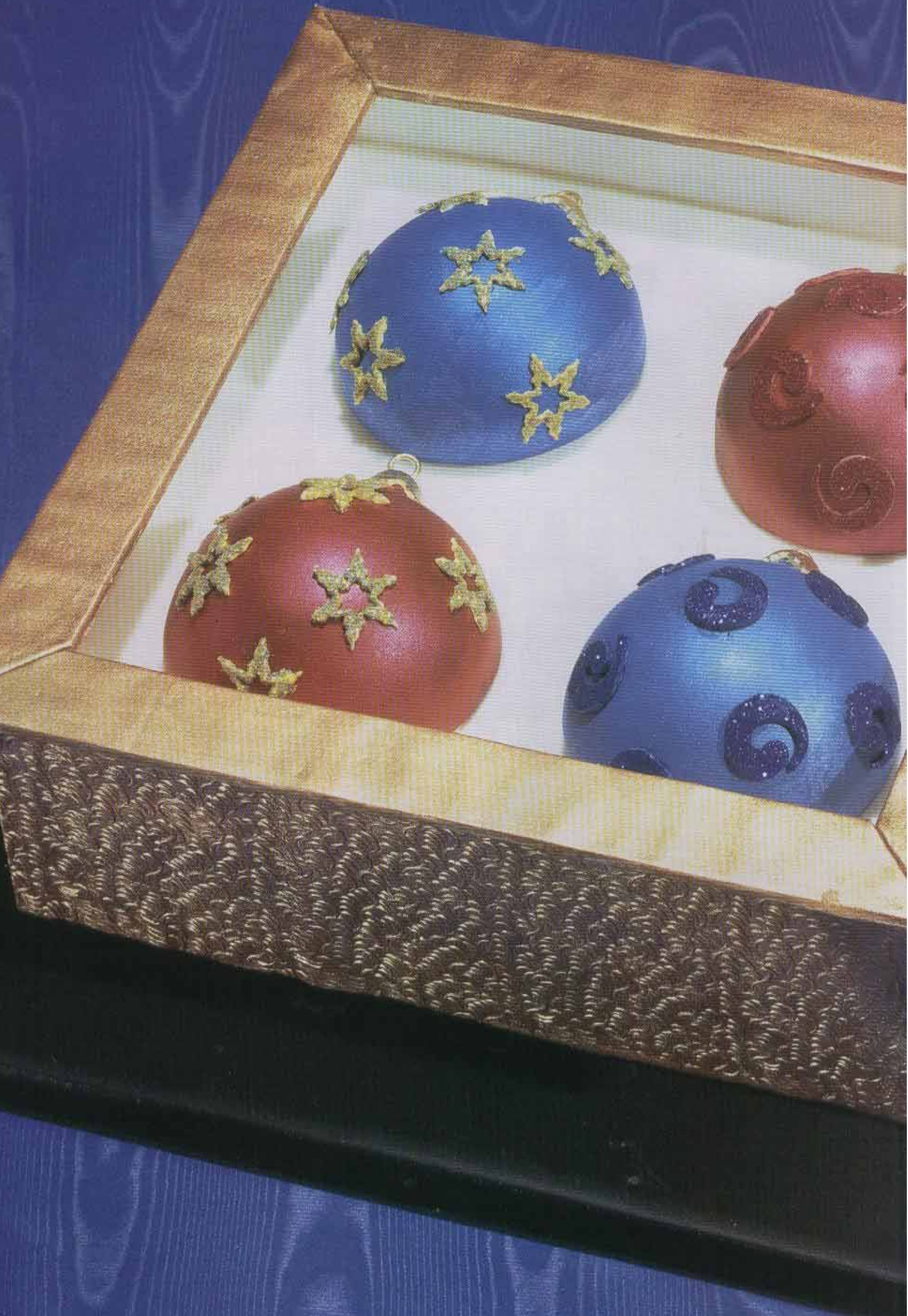


11 Use stemtex. Tape the snowballs and the icicles into a long stem, mix the different sizes and the icicles as you go along. Hold the top of the stem against the rolling pin and twist around to the end to create a good shape ready to place on the glass.

12 Spray all the items lightly with the pearl edible lustre spray and leave to dry. Fold the napkin through the holder and wrap the snowballs around the stem of the glass tighten to secure. A ring of full width stemtex will stop it moving.



Jo Marcangelo



Box of Christmas Baubles

This edible box of Christmas baubles can be made in any colour scheme to match the decorations that will adorn your tree this year.

YOU WILL NEED

- square rich fruit or firm madeira 25 x 6.5cm (10 x $2\frac{1}{2}$in)
- marzipan 1.5kg (3lb 8oz)
- buttercream or apricot glaze
- clear alcohol
- sugarpaste white 800g (1lb 12oz), black 750g ($1\frac{1}{2}$lb), red 500g (1lb)
- sugarpaste atlantic blue 500g (1lb) (Renshaws)
- icing sugar for dusting
- flower paste pale yellow, red and blue
- mexican paste 750g ($1\frac{1}{2}$lb)
- cornflour for dusting
- edible glitter disco range gold hologram, red hologram and azure (Edable Art)
- edible lustre dust colours golden rose, lava red and flash blue (Edable Art)
- painting solution (Edable Art)
- edible lustre spray bronze (PME)
- small quantity of royal icing
- cake drum square 36cm (14in)
- flat board for drying
- mini ball tin $3\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{1}{2}$in (Wilton)
- cranked palette knife
- pizza wheel
- set square 45°
- patterned rolling pin angel hair (Orchard Products)
- lace cutter set (Orchard Products)
- sugarcraft gun
- plastic dowel
- scriber tool, thick (Kit Box)
- snowflake cutter S056 Type 5 (Kit Box)
- spiral cutter 9200 (Fine Cut)
- paintbrushes fine and wide
- piping tube number 2 (PME)
- ribbon for board edge
- glue stick

PREPARATION

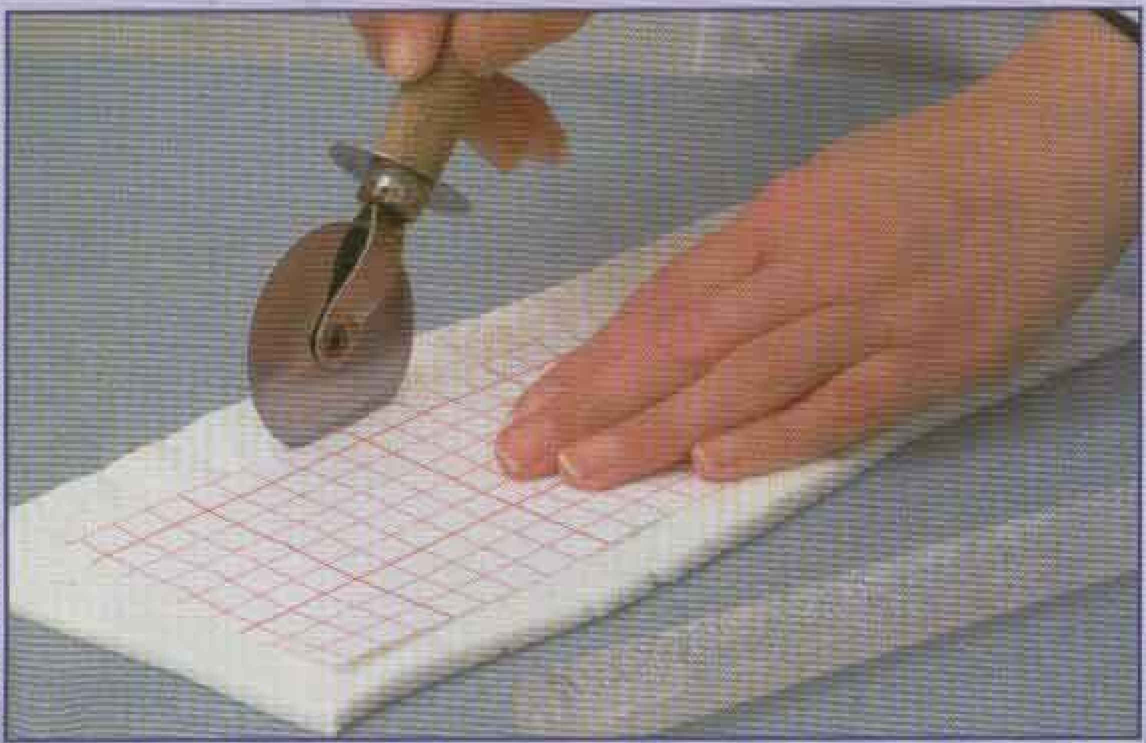
Marzipan the top of the cake first, then use separate strips, cut to size, to cover each side and smooth the joins, this helps to keep all the angles sharp. If you use fruit cake brush the cake with boiled apricot glaze and cover with marzipan. If you use sponge cake, cut to size then layer with jam and buttercream. Thinly coat the top and sides with some of the buttercream and cover with a thin layer of marzipan.

1 Roll out the white sugarpaste to 5mm ($^1/_4$in) thick. Cover just the top of the cake with this. Trim the excess icing flush with the top edge of the cake; use the sides of the cake as a guide. (See technique.) Use smoothers for a professional finish. This forms the base for the baubles.

TECHNIQUE

Place the smoother onto the surface of the sugarpaste so that it slightly overhangs the edge of the cake then, use a cranked palette knife, remove the excess paste. Cut upwards against the smoother.

2 To make the sides of the box, measure the length, width and height of the cake, add on a small amount to allow for the depth of the baubles when they are on top of the cake. Roll out mexican paste to 3mm ($^1/_8$in) thick, use the angel hair rolling pin for the final roll.

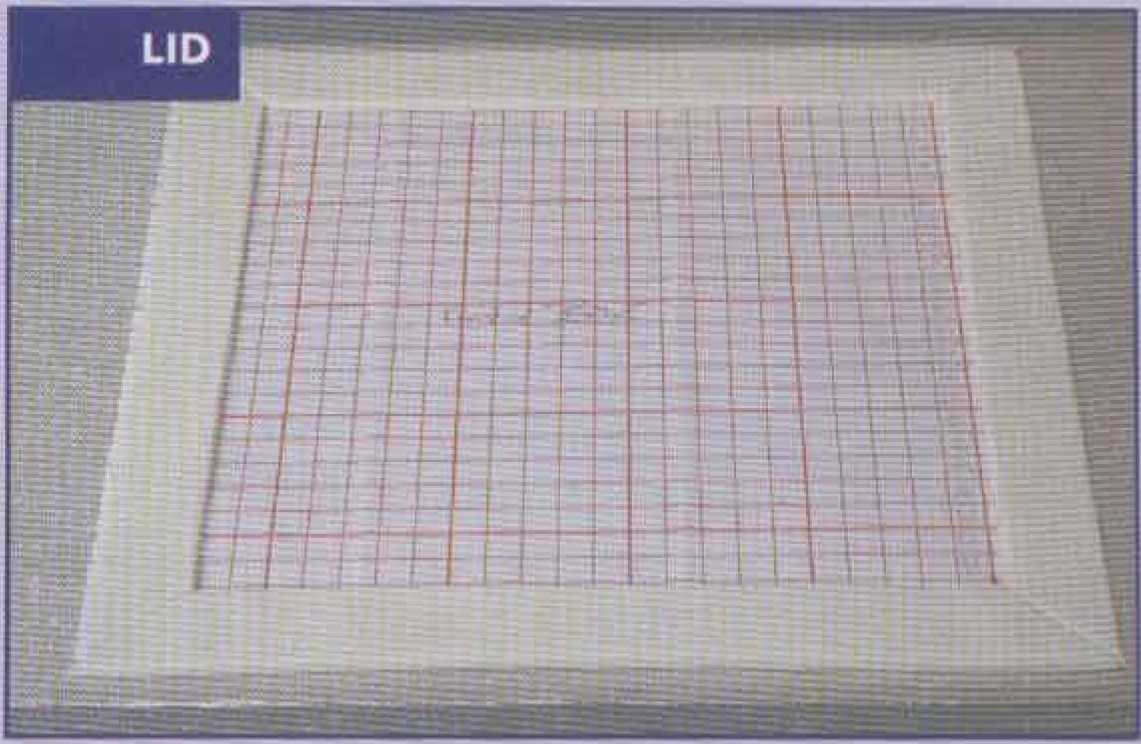


3 Make a paper template, adjust the size so that the sides of the box meet at the corners. Use the template and a pizza wheel, cut out the four side pieces (see Technique). Allow to dry thoroughly.

TECHNIQUE

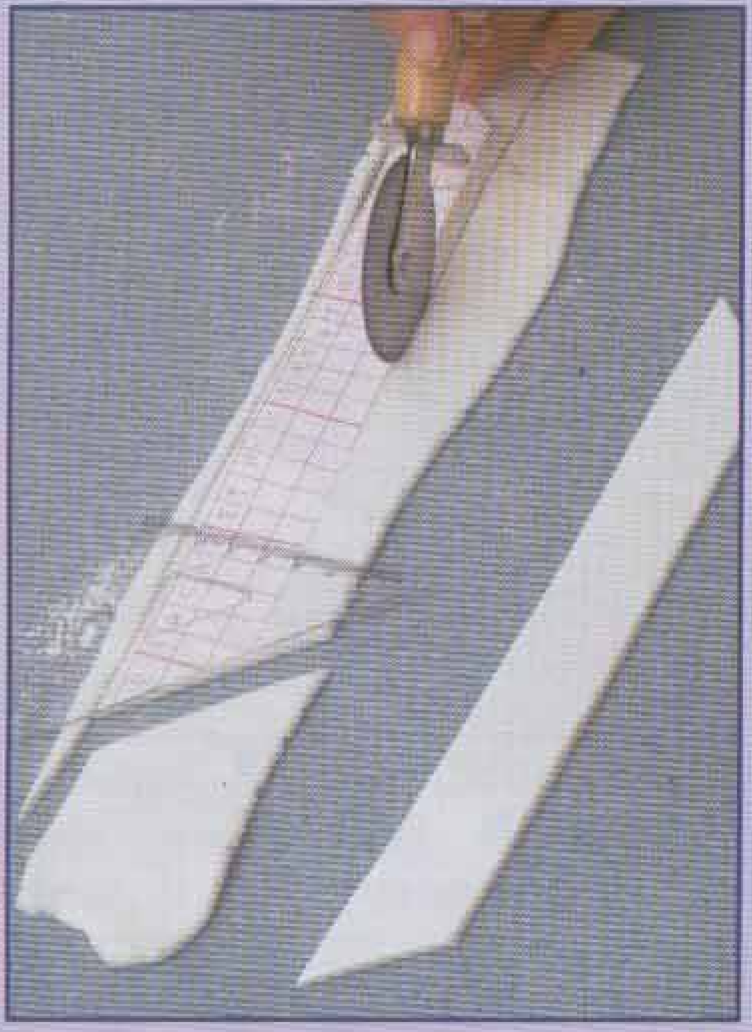
When you cut out the side pieces, roll the mexican paste out and then move to the cornflour covered or non-stick surface that it is to be dried on, before the final roll with the patterned rolling pin. This will prevent distortion of the piece when you move it to the drying surface. Roll between spacers to achieve an even thickness. Make sure even pressure is applied throughout to obtain a good result.

4 Slightly dampen the board. Roll out long strips of black icing 3mm (1/8in) thick and position around the board. Mitre the corners by overlapping and then cutting through and remove the spare paste from underneath and above. Smooth over to hide the joins. Leave to dry overnight.



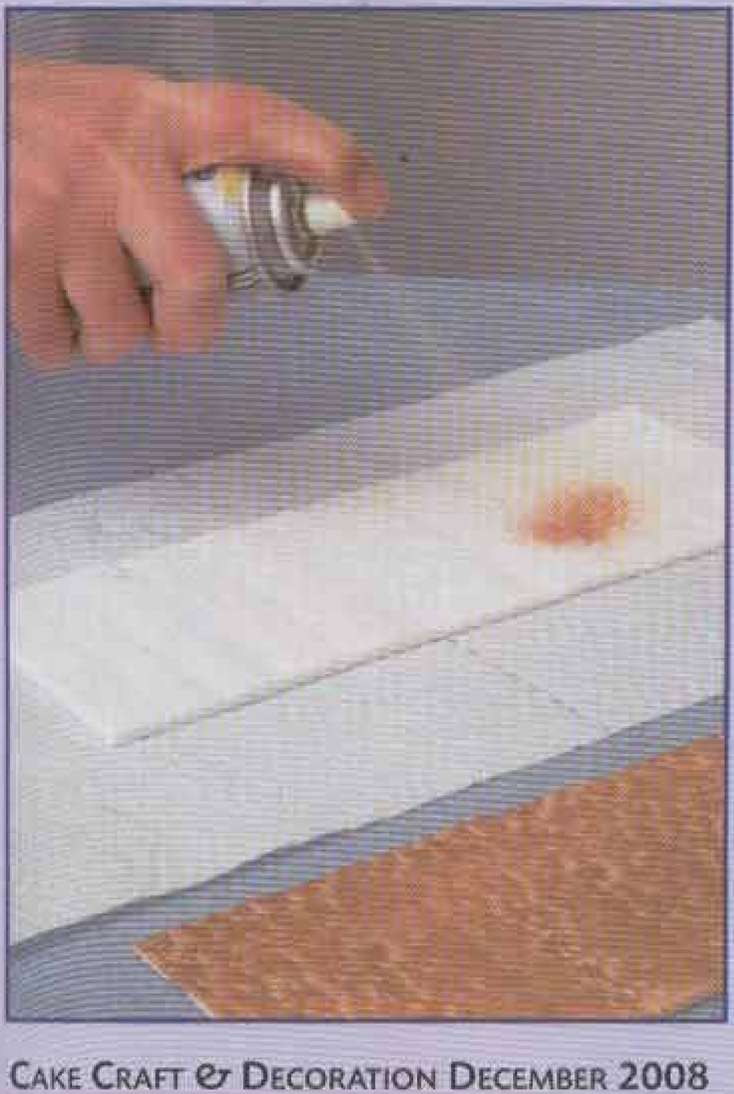
5 Measure the width of the box from the outer edges and add 2cm (3/4in) and make a template for the lid, mitre the corners.

6 Cut out four lid pieces and allow to dry thoroughly, on a sheet of perspex or spare board covered with film. When dry, spray the lid pieces with edible lustre colour. Make sure that the edges are coated properly with the bronze edible lustre spray so that no white paste is visible when you assemble the lid pieces onto the cake.

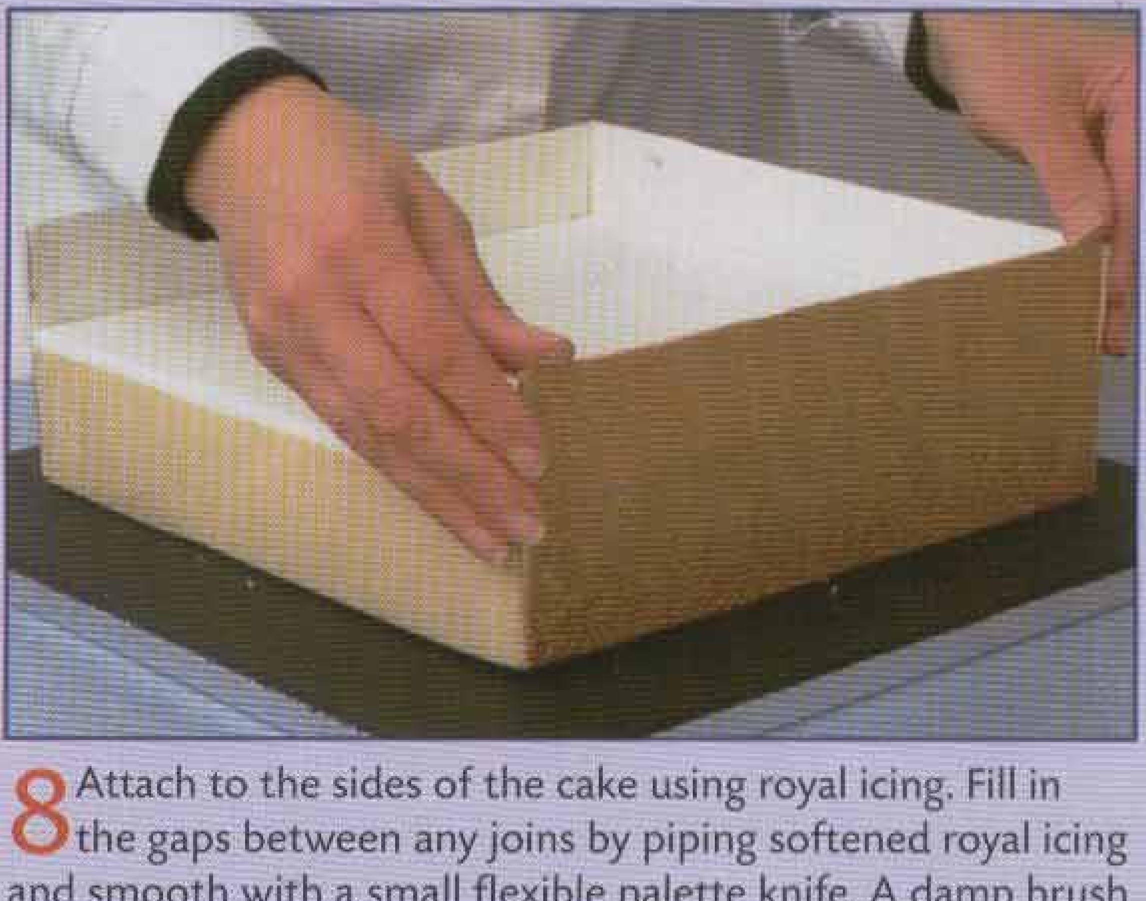


Cake Tip

Use spacers to keep the paste at an even thickness when rolling out paste. Two bamboo skewers or strips of card placed under each end of the rolling pin work very well.



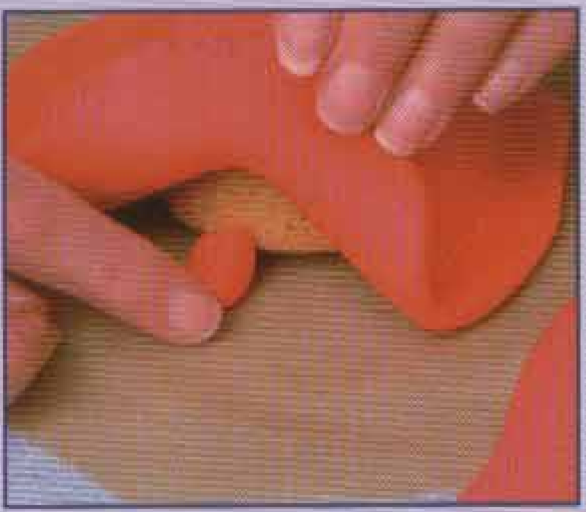
7 Place each of the side pieces in turn onto a paper towel and spray with the bronze edible lustre colour. Shake the can well and hold away from the paste. Press the nozzle and spray the bronze lustre evenly across the paste, allow to dry.

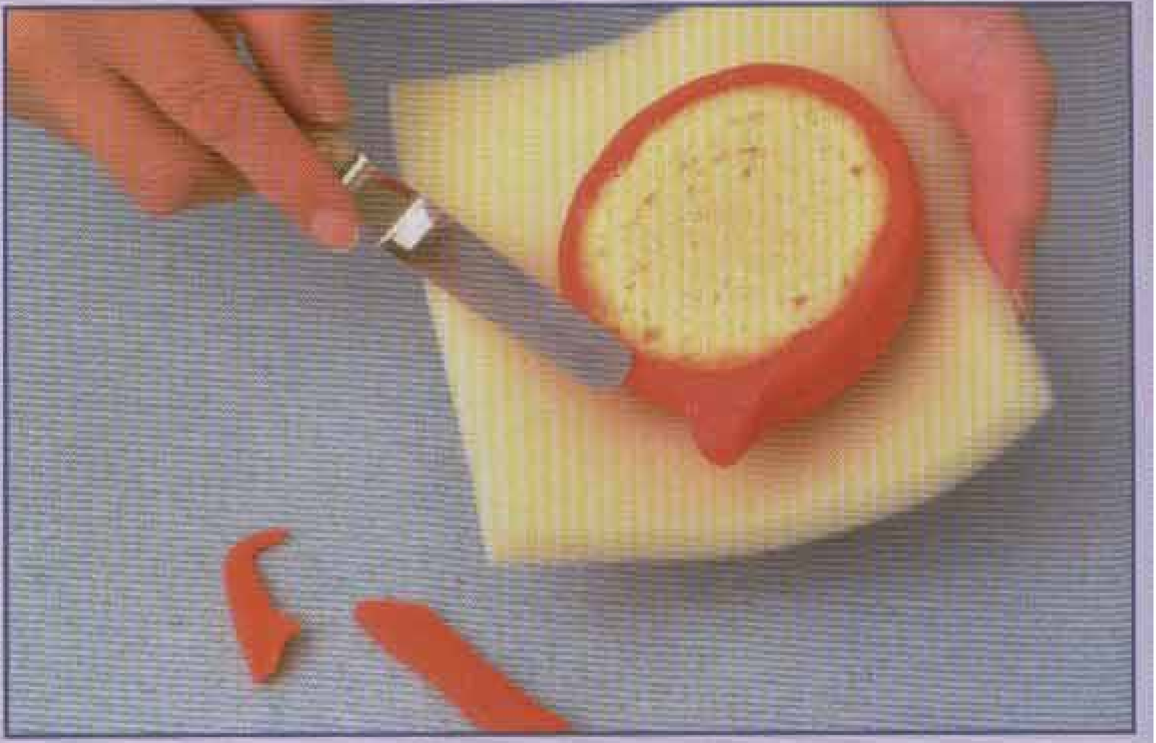


8 Attach to the sides of the cake using royal icing. Fill in the gaps between any joins by piping softened royal icing and smooth with a small flexible palette knife. A damp brush is very useful to smooth and remove any excess icing.

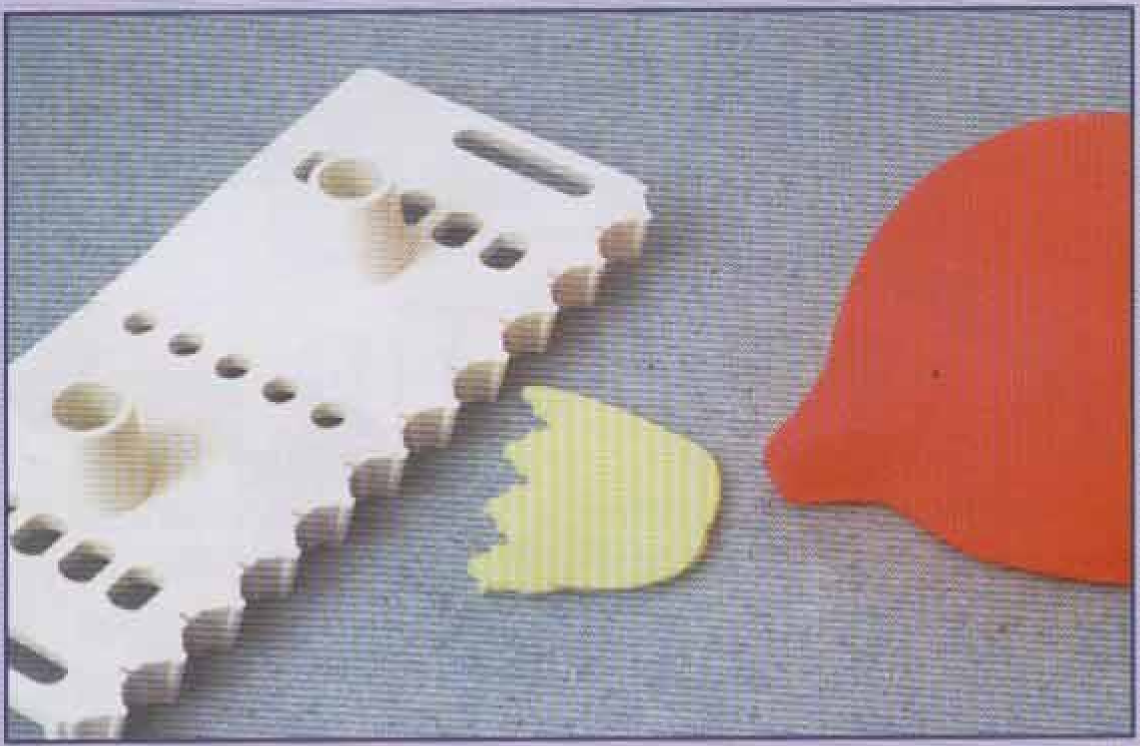
9 For the baubles, prepare the sponge cakes. Trim to make sure that they are level. Use a serrated knife and a sawing action and carefully remove any excess from the tops.

10 Coat with a thin layer of buttercream. The use of buttercream will also help to obtain a smooth finish. Roll out sugarpaste to 3mm ($^1/_8$in) thick. Place a pea-sized piece of sugarpaste as shown and cover with sugarpaste.

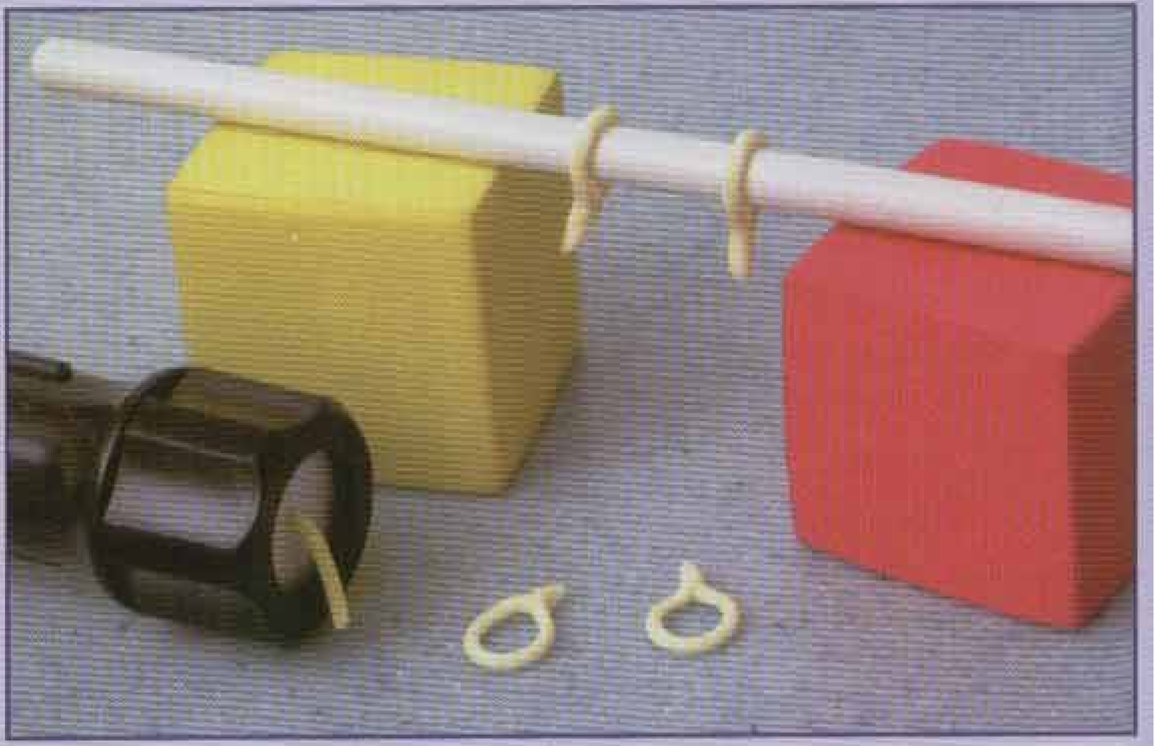




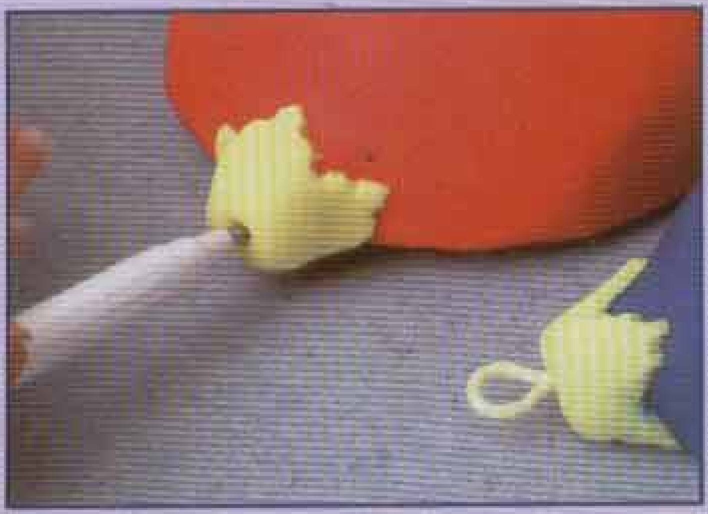
11 Trim around the edge, if you use a knife to trim the paste, choose a palette knife as this will not cut into the cake. Use a piece of foam to help prevent your hands leaving marks in the sugarpaste.



12 Roll out a piece of yellow flower paste thinly 2cm ($^3/_4$in) wide and cut 3 'points' with the lace cutter. Secure with edible glue, use your fingers to ease the points so that they fit snugly onto the curved shape of the bauble as shown. Trim as necessary to achieve a good finish.



13 Fill the sugarpaste gun with softened pale yellow coloured flower paste and a small hole disc, extrude a short length and form into a circular shape. Join the ends of each loop together and trim the end to a point. Slide the loop over a plastic dowel to dry.

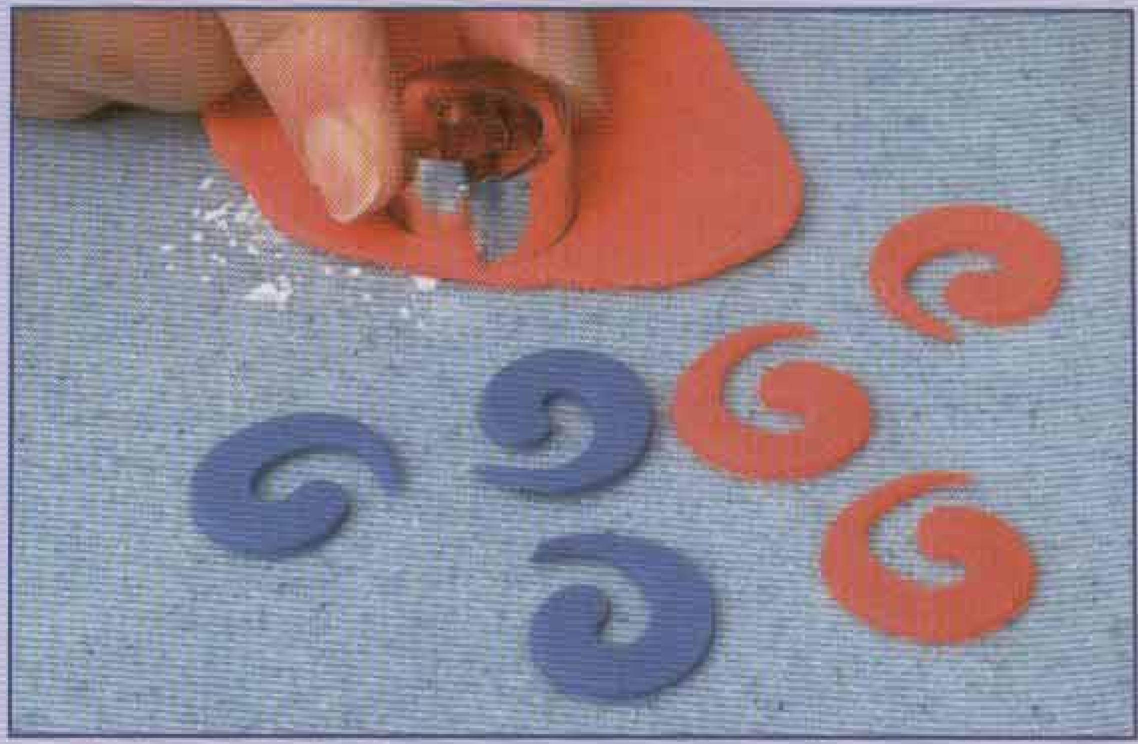


14 Use a thick scribe tool to make a hole at the top of the bauble so that the loop will fit inside. When dry, place the loop into the hole and secure with edible glue.

15 Mix gold lustre dust with clear alcohol or painting solution and paint the loops and the bauble holders.

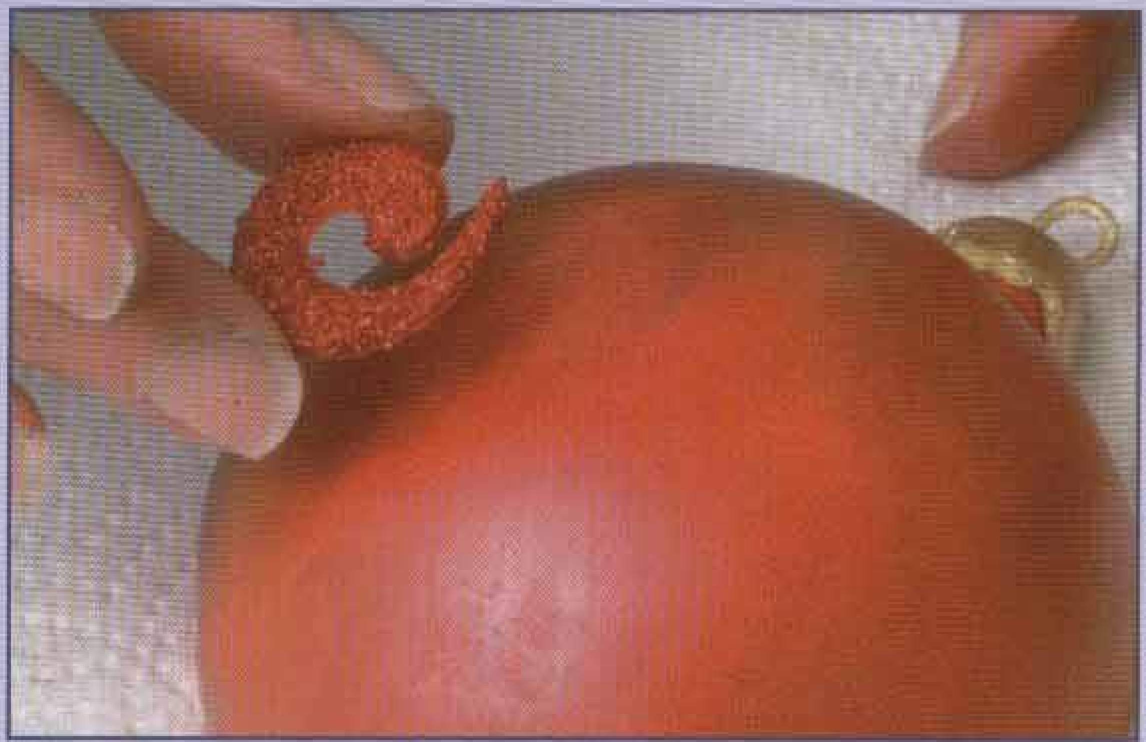
16 Place a small quantity of lustre dust into a palette and add a little paint solution or clear alcohol, then use a wide paintbrush, apply a thin, even coating of lustre colour paint over the surface of each of the baubles. Set aside to dry.

17 Roll out a small quantity of yellow flower paste finely and use cornflour to dust. Cut out a few snowflakes at a time with cutter SO56. Use the release tool provided with the cutter to help remove the paste from the cutter.

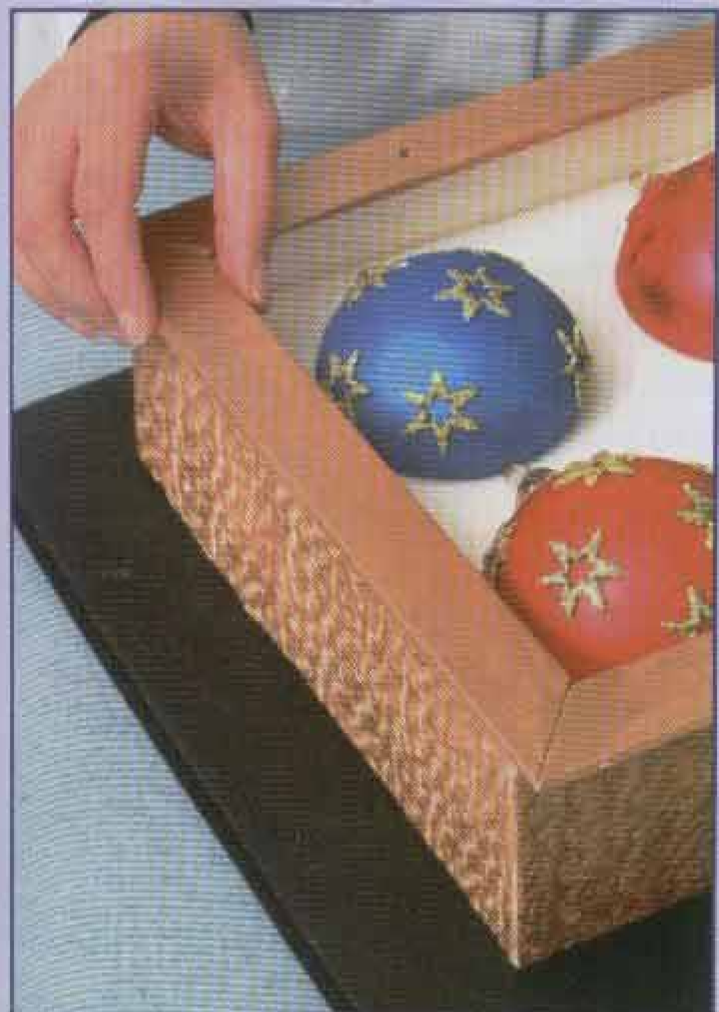


18 Roll out a piece of coloured flower paste very thinly. Cut out a few swirl shapes at a time.

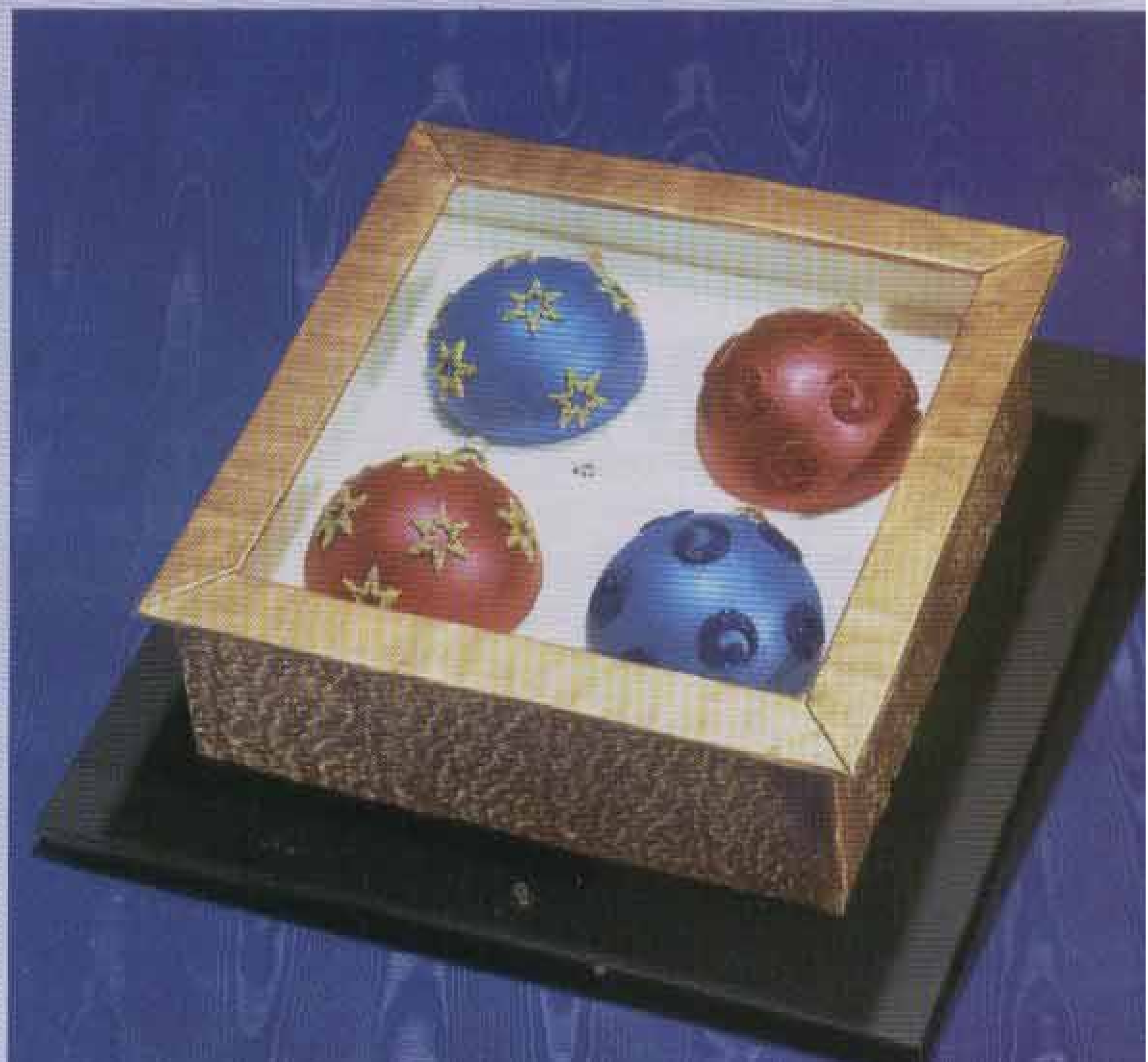
19 Paint the snowflakes and swirls with edible glue and sprinkle with non toxic, red, blue and gold glitter. Work on folded pieces of paper so that you can tip the surplus glitter back into the pot to be reused.



20 Whilst they are still pliable, place the snowflakes and swirls randomly all over the baubles but leave large enough gaps in between. Attach the baubles to the cake in the position shown.



21 Pipe a line around the top edge of the box. Assemble the pieces for the 'lid', position them with the outer edges 1cm ($^3/_8$in) overhanging the box sides, make sure that the corners are neat. Use a glue stick to attach ribbon around the sides of the cake board.



20th East Anglian Exhibition

The 20th exhibition was held last year in Cottenham and was opened by Stephen Orbell. The theme of the exhibition was appropriately after 20 years 'Nostalgia' with Chelmsford winning the branch table, the Best in Show going to Sally Porter, Best Royal Iced exhibit was made by Rachel Garner and the Best Floral exhibit was awarded to Wendy Bedford.

Miniature Exhibit (6in cube)

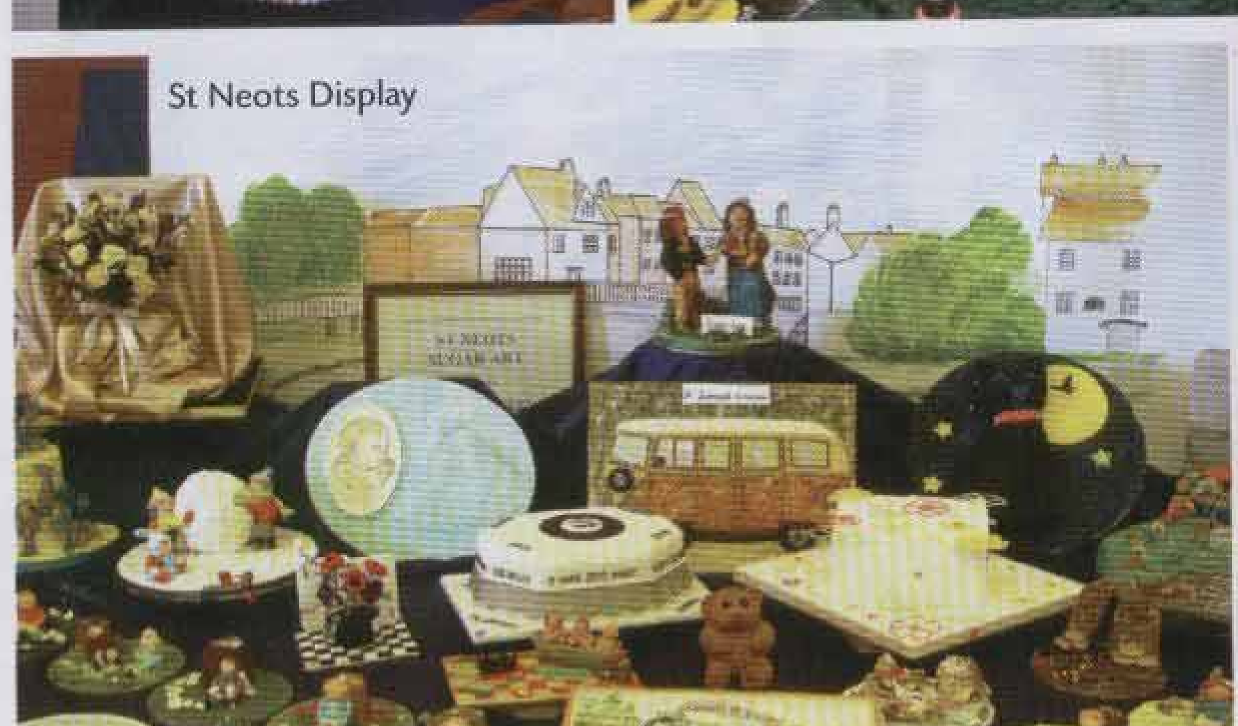
Best Floral Exhibit Wendy Bedford

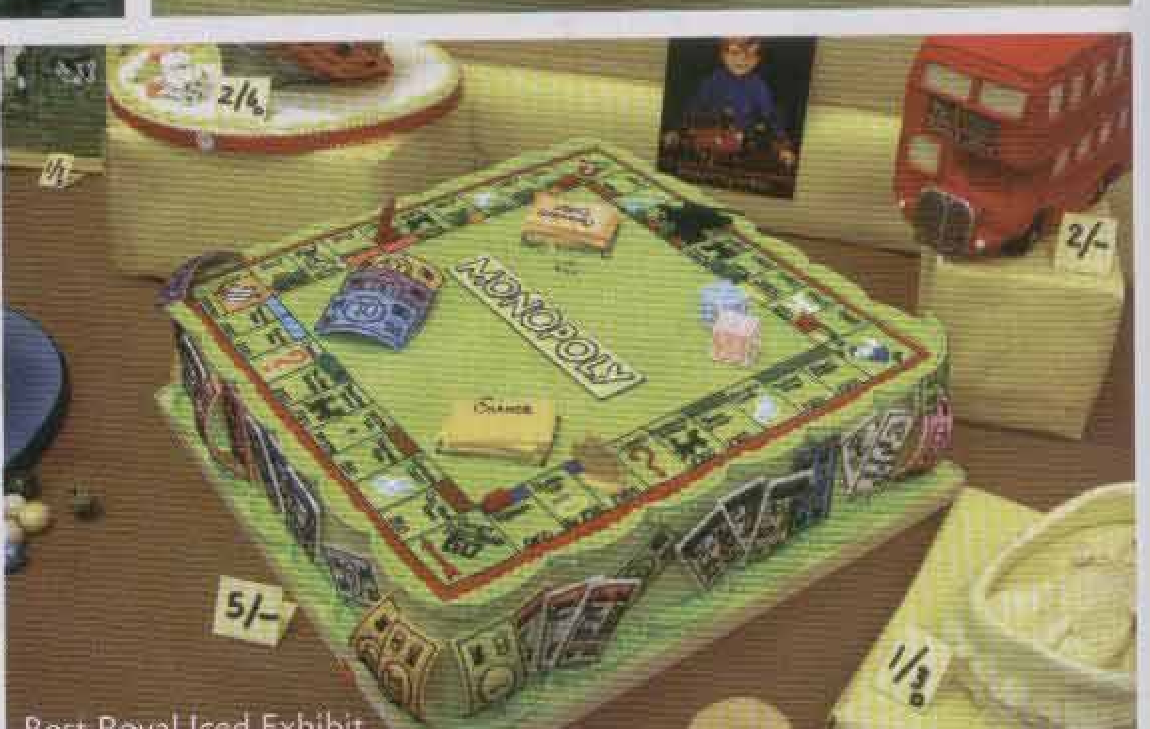
Marzipan Model Exhibit Georgie Godbold

Norwich Exhibit

Romford Display

Pastillage Exhibit


St Neots Display



Best Royal Iced Exhibit Rachel Garner

Second Freestanding Figure

Third Freestanding Figure

First Small Celebration Cakes

First Freestanding Figure

Cottenham Exhibit

Best in Show Sally Porter

Table of Honour Ann Cornwell

First Professional Competitor's Choice

Table of Honour

Children's Class

Children's Class

Children's Class

Poinsettia and Ivy

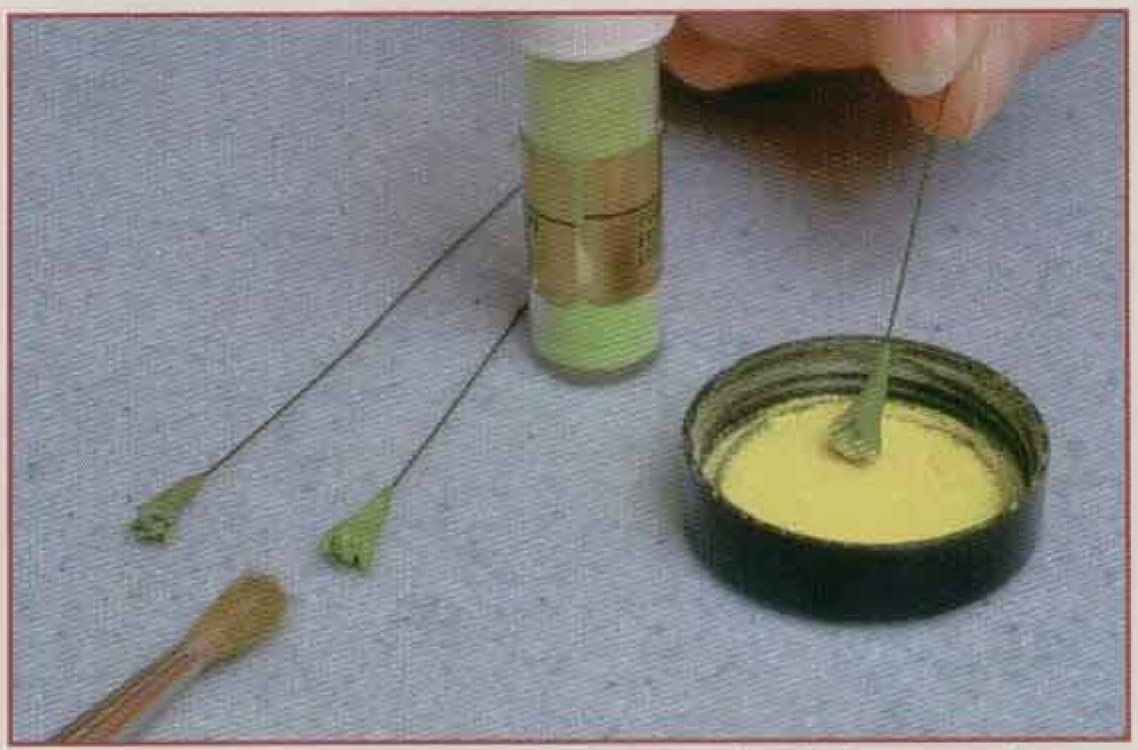
Jane Ann Barraclough

Poinsettias are everywhere at Christmas, they are quite easy to make, you will only need one for a small cake.

YOU WILL NEED

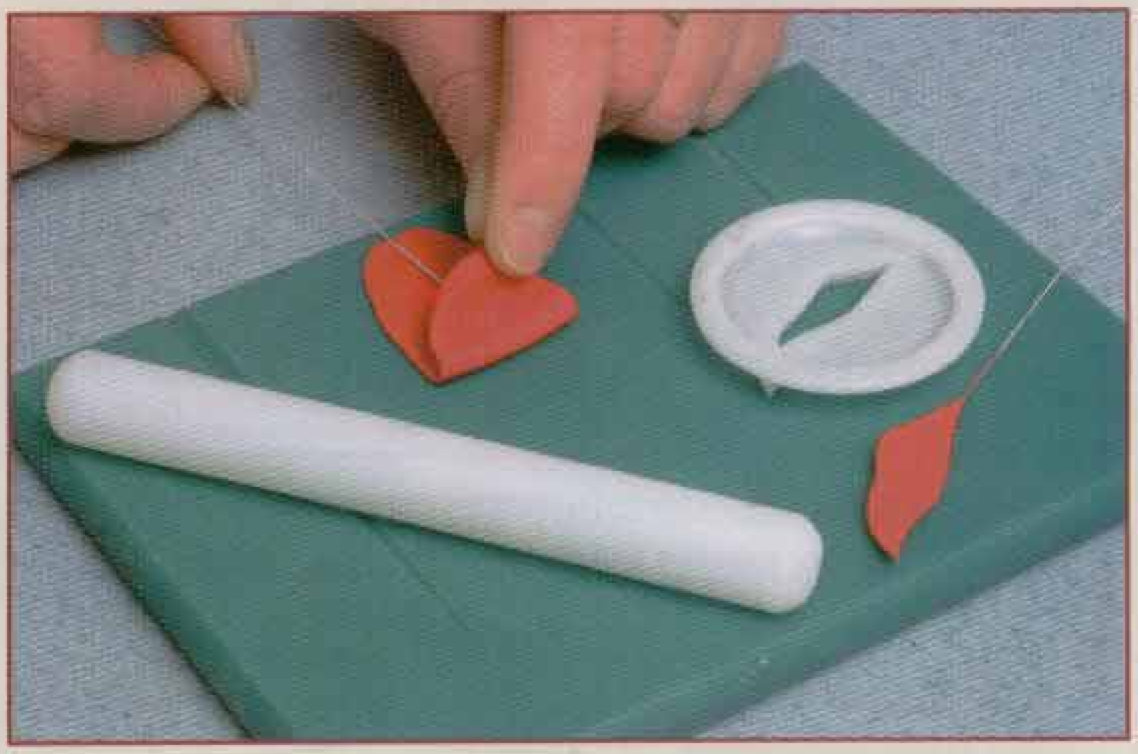
- flower paste pillar, white (Cakemaker)
- white flower paste coloured with spruce green paste colour (Sugarflair)
- fresh egg white or sugar glue
- wires green 30, white 28 gauge
- green grooved board
- small rolling pin
- dogbone tool
- small scissors
- poinsettia cutter set (FMM)
- rose leaf veiner
- multi leaf veiner (Sunflower SugarArt)
- ivy leaf cutter and veiner
- pollen (semolina and primrose dust)
- dusting powders moss green, spring green, red, brilliant silver (Sugarflair)
- dusting brush
- green tape
- bubble foam

1 Roll a small ball of spruce green paste and pull it onto a 30g wire brushed with sugar glue. Flatten the top. Cut into the sides and top with small scissors.

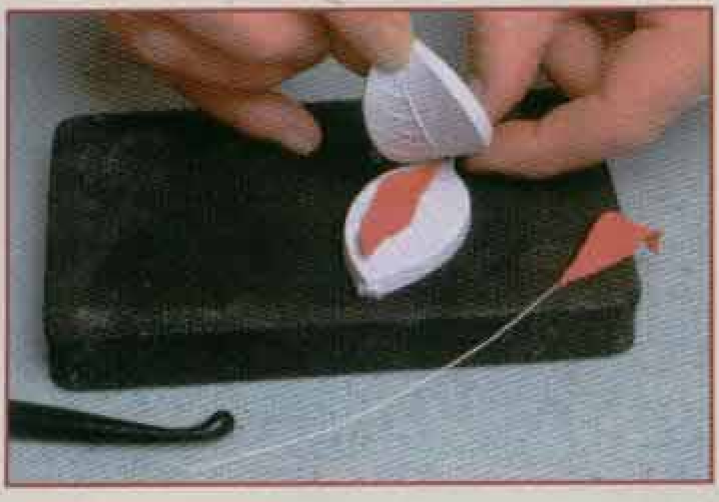


2 Dust lightly with spring green. Brush a little egg white or sugar glue across the top catching the spiky bits. Dip into pollen (either bought or make your own).

3 Tape 9 of these together to make one centre for each flower, use $^{1}/_{4}$ width tape. Start to tape just below where the paste begins and bend outwards slightly.

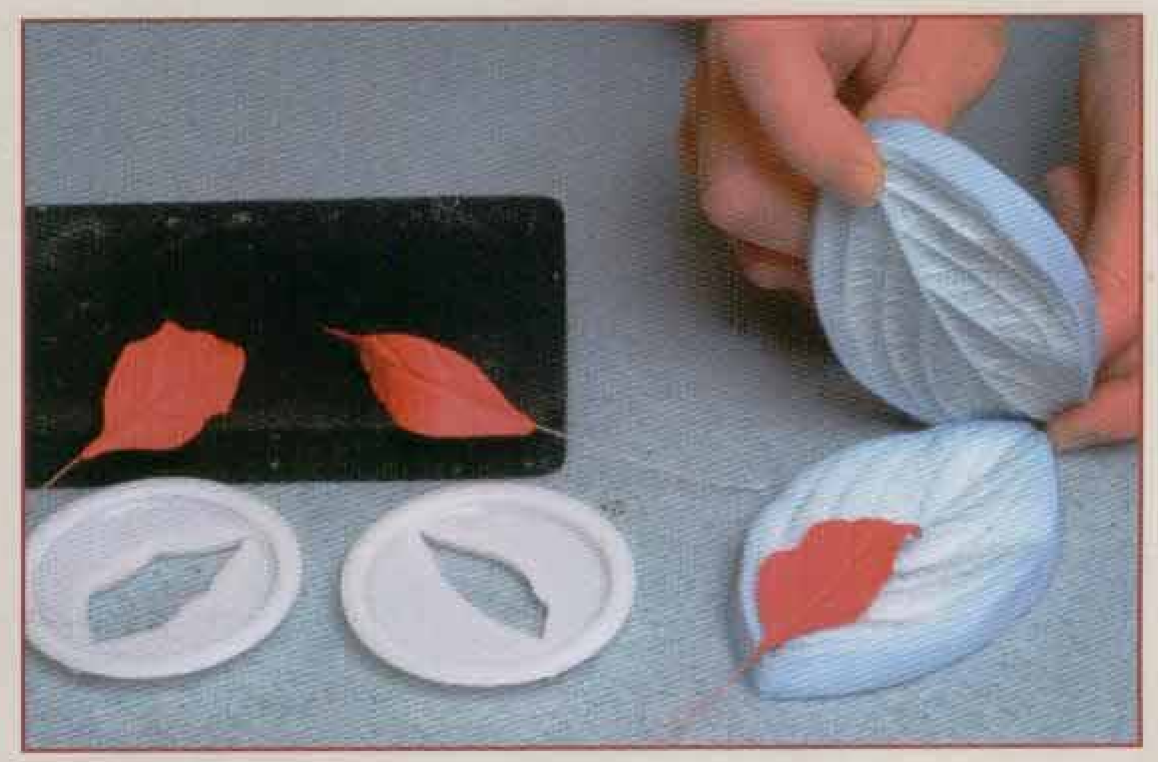


4 Use a number 3 poinsettia cutter and cut out 3 leaves from red paste by rolling the paste onto the grooved board, brush with sugar glue and lay a 28g wire on paste over the groove, roll paste over the wire to bed the wire into the paste.



5 Soften with a dog bone tool on a work pad. Lay on the rose leaf veiner and squash together. Dry on bubble foam.

6 Repeat previous step with cutter number 4 again cutting out 3, vein and leave to dry.



7 Repeat step 5 again with cutter number 5, cut out 5. With cutter number 6 cut out 3. Use a larger veiner on these. Leave to dry.

8 Use the number 7 poinsettia cutter, cut 4 from spruce green flower paste again secure these onto 28g wires. Vein with the multi leaf veiner. Dry on bubble foam. Over dust with moss green then go over the edges and down the centre veining with red.

9 Tape the 3 smallest bracts around the centre followed by the next size slightly below and in the gaps, bend the wires at a right angle to the stem. Tape in the next size of 5 followed by the final 3.

Cake Tips

CRAFT & DECORATION

File edges of petals with an emery board if they are a bit rough.

Make a poinsettia in white with a gold centre and gold ivy leaves as an alternative to red.

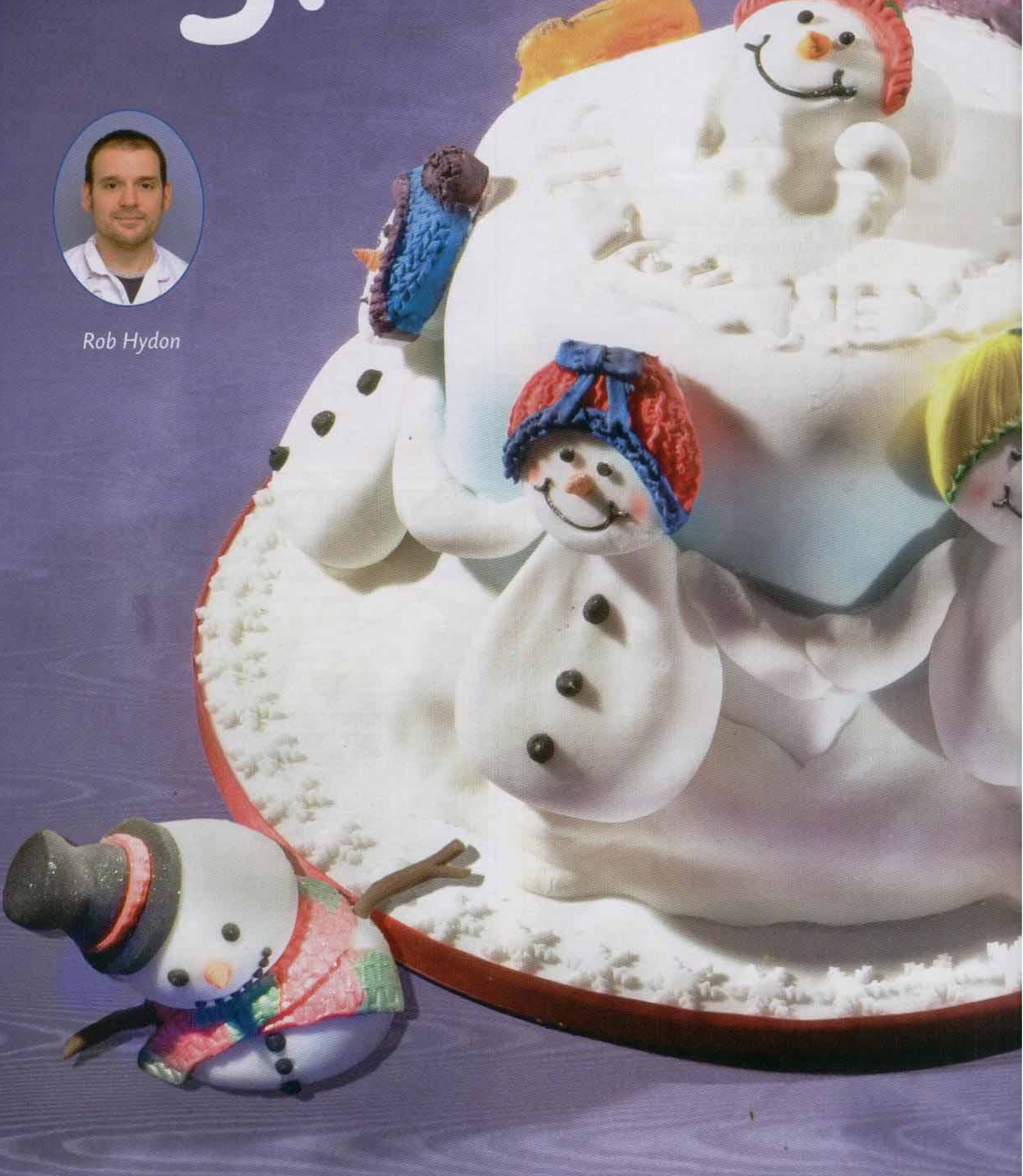
Place several in a shallow dish for a table decoration.

10 Tape the 4 green bracts around the base of the flower. Steam gently to set the colour.

11 Cut ivy leaves from white paste onto 28g wire and vein. Leave to dry. Dust with silver, wire 4-5 leaves together and steam. Wire around the poinsettia and use as a Christmas centrepiece.

Snowman

Rob Hydon



SUGARPASTE SNOWMAN YOU WILL NEED

- sugarpaste white 300g (10oz), red 60g (2oz), green 60g (2oz), brown 30g (1oz), black 90g (3oz)
- super pearl lustre (VeeBee)
- fine basket weave rolling pin (PME)
- soft paintbrush
- paste colour black
- liquid colour orange
- royal icing
- craft knife
- ready made icing bags (Cakeboards)
- round cutters
- square cutters
- pizza cutter

MERINGUE SNOWMAN YOU WILL NEED

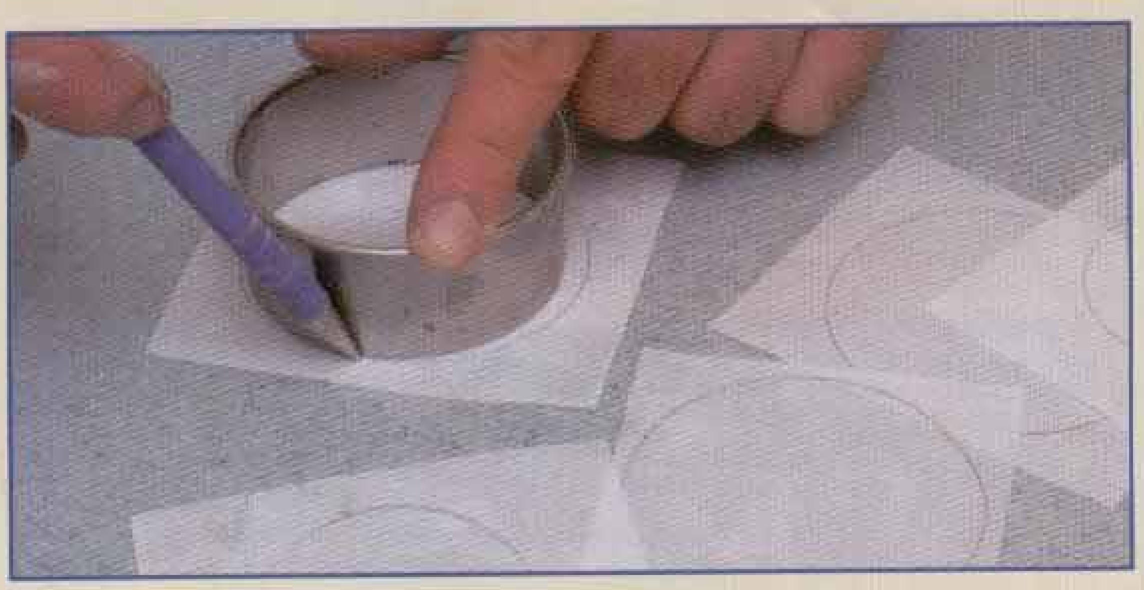
- basic meringue - see recipe
- stiff royal icing black, orange and brown
- milk chocolate
- large disposable savoy bag
- small piping bag
- mixer and whisk
- plastic scraper
- baking parchment
- caster sugar
- egg whites
- vanilla essence

SNOWMAN CAKE YOU WILL NEED

- sponge cake hexagonal 20 x 15cm (8 x 6in)
- cake drum 14in (35cm)
- sugarpaste white 2700g (6lb)
- super smoother (Edgers)
- airbrush (The Airbrush Company)
- liquid colours (Kroma Kolors)
- water
- snowmen head moulds (Karen Davies)
- ready made icing bag (Cakeboards)
- royal icing
- paste colour black (Sugarflair)
- piping nozzle number two
- snowflake plunger cutter set (PME)
- icing sugar
- silver hologram (Sugar City)

Meringue Snowman

1 Mix the meringue as per the recipe. Cut several 10cm (4in) squares of baking parchment and place them on a clean baking tray that is free of grease.



2 Draw 6 x 1.5cm (2 $^1/_2$in) circles on half of the squares and 9cm (3 $^1/_2$in) circles on the other half.

Meringue Recipe
Caster Sugar 200g
Egg Whites 4
Vanilla Essence 1 teaspoon
Method
Beat egg whites with a whisk until stiff.
Add 4 tablespoons of sugar.
Continue beating until the mixture is white and glossy.
Fold in the remaining sugar with a spatula a spoonful at a time.
Fold in the essence with the last of the sugar and continue folding until it forms stiff peaks.
Bake Gas $^1/_2$/120°C/250°F for 1 hour or until dry.

3 Fill the large savoy bag with meringue, use a plastic scraper, fill half way, twist the top and cut off 2.5cm (1in) from the bottom of the piping bag.

4 Pipe in a circular motion. Follow the larger circle you have drawn as a guide. Gradually gain height until you have reached 6.5cm (2 $^1/_2$in).

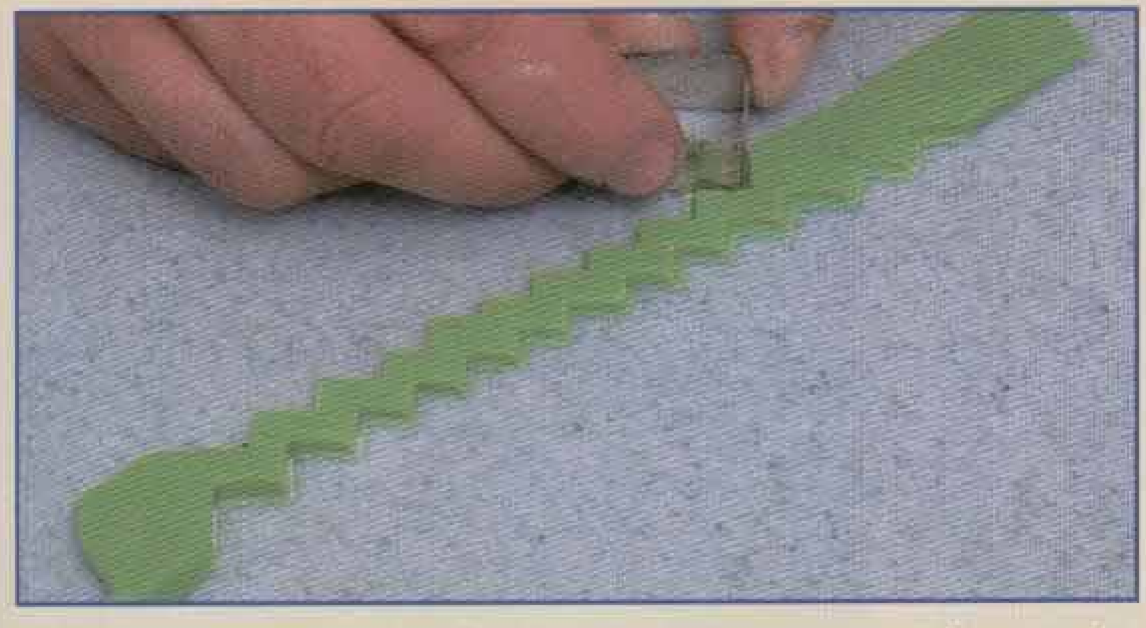
5 Repeat with the smaller circle to a height of 4cm (1 $^1/_2$in). Bake. Once cool dip the base of the larger piece in melted milk chocolate.

6 Attach the smaller circle onto the larger one, pipe the eyes, mouth and buttons in black icing. Pipe the remaing features in the same way as for the Sugarpaste Snowman.

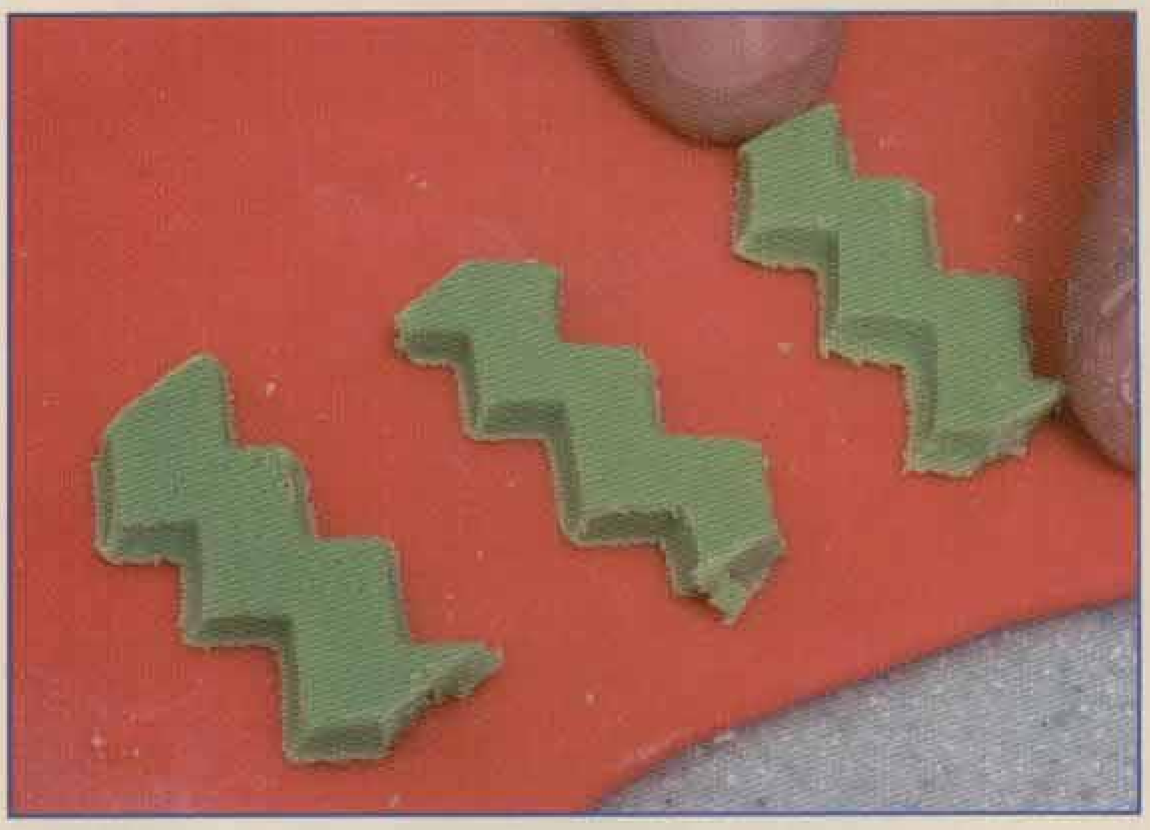
Sugarpaste Snowman

1 Roll two balls of white sugarpaste, one should be two-thirds the size of the other. Place the small one on top of the large one and secure with water. Allow to dry.

2 Roll a sausage of black sugarpaste 2.5cm (1in) diameter and cut to 3cm ($1^{1}/_{4}$in) length. Roll between two fingers to create a dog bone shape. Cut a 5cm (2in) circle of black sugarpaste and place your dog bone on its end in the centre. Secure with water



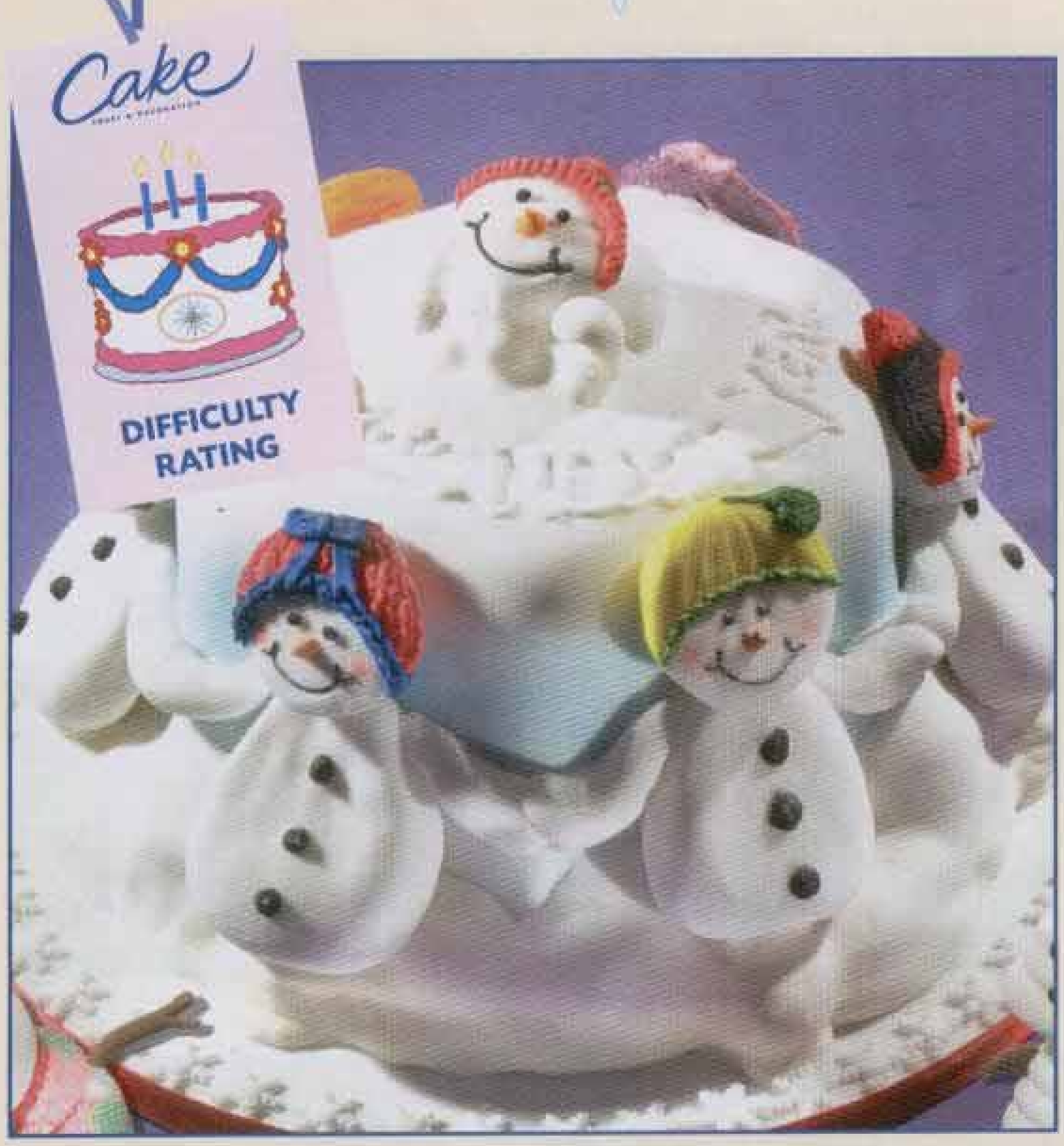
3 Roll out two strips of sugarpaste one green and one red 15 x 14cm (6 x 2in). Cut out a green strip the length of the sugarpaste by 2.5cm (1in) wide. Cut into zigzags with a square cutter.



4 Cut a strip of red sugarpaste as in step 3. Place the green zigzag across the strip. Dust with super pearl and texture with the quilted rolling pin. Trim and cut to size then wrap it around the snowman's neck.

5 Roll brown sugarpaste 6.5cm ($2^{1}/_{2}$in) long and thin. Score the top and make some notches to resemble a branch. Allow to dry thoroughly. Make a hole either side of the snowman and insert the branches.

6 Mark out the eyes, mouth, nose and buttons first then pipe them on with stiff black royal icing. Pipe the nose the same but in orange. Once a large enough droplet of icing has formed keep the pressure on and move the piping bag up and down to create ridges in the carrot.



Snowman Cake

1 Ice the cake and board in white sugarpaste then smooth over with the smoother. Airbrush or dust the sides pale blue. Once dry roll random sized balls of sugarpaste and place them around the edge of the cake.

2 Lightly dampen the balls of sugarpaste and cover with a layer of thin icing. Manipulate and smooth the icing around the balls to form a snowdrift for the snowmen to rest on.

3 Use the snowmen head moulds. Dust the sugarpaste and the mould with a dusting bag and press out two of each head and a couple of spares. Once they are dry pipe the nose in orange then the eyes and mouth in black. Airbrush or dust the cheeks lightly in red. Paint the hats in your desired colours.

Cake Tips

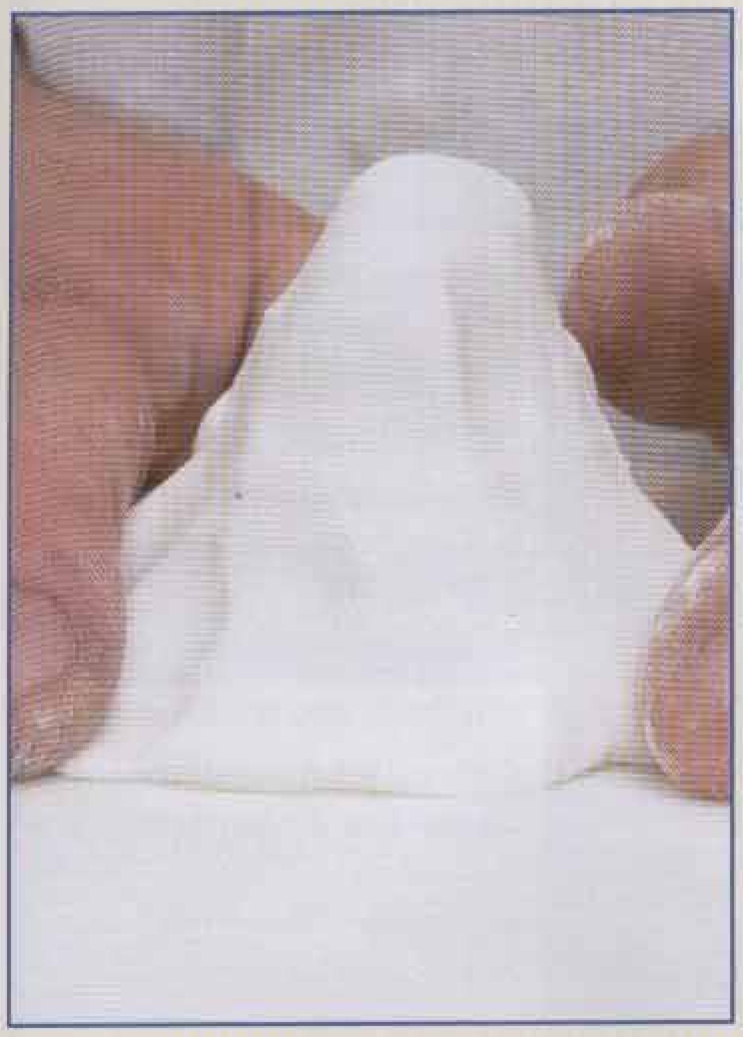
Use a damp paintbrush to ease the icing into position.

Do not worry about the wording being neat, the more random, the better, to make it look natural.

To test run out icing, run your palette knife through the icing and the mark that is left should disappear on its own by the count of ten. If not, add more water and if it disappears before the count of ten add more icing.

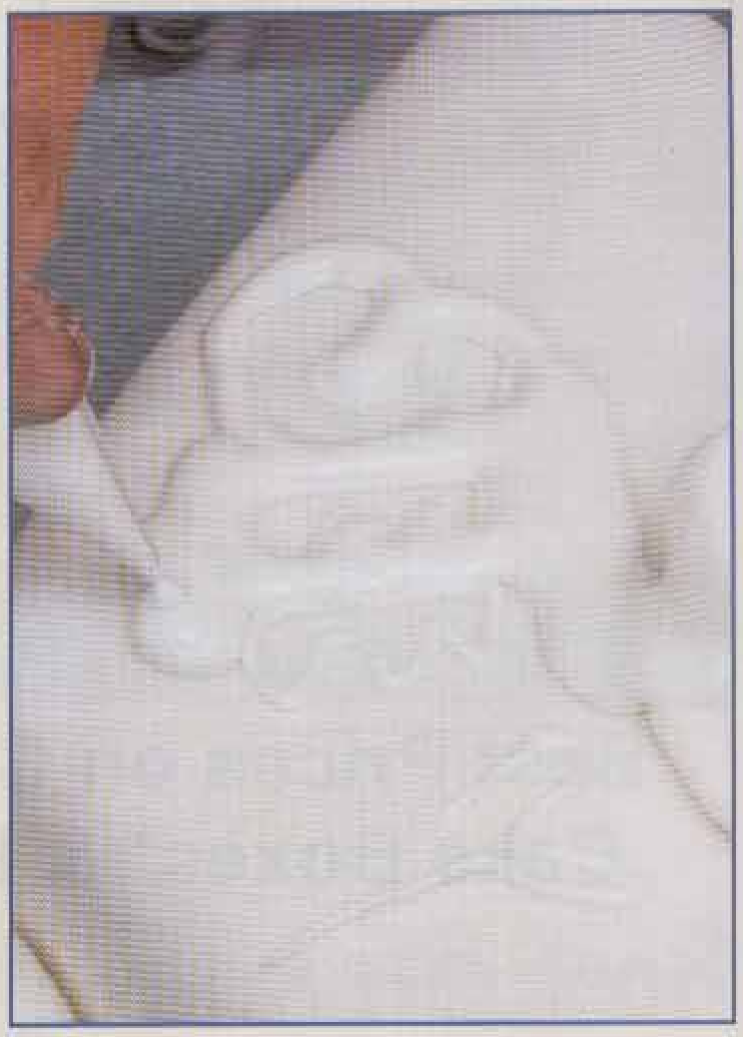
4 Take 170g (6oz) of white sugarpaste and mould it round. Make it thinner at one end. This is to be used for the snowman's body. Pipe the buttons at the same time as the face and once dry attach the body and the face to the cake with royal icing. Use the snowdrift for support.

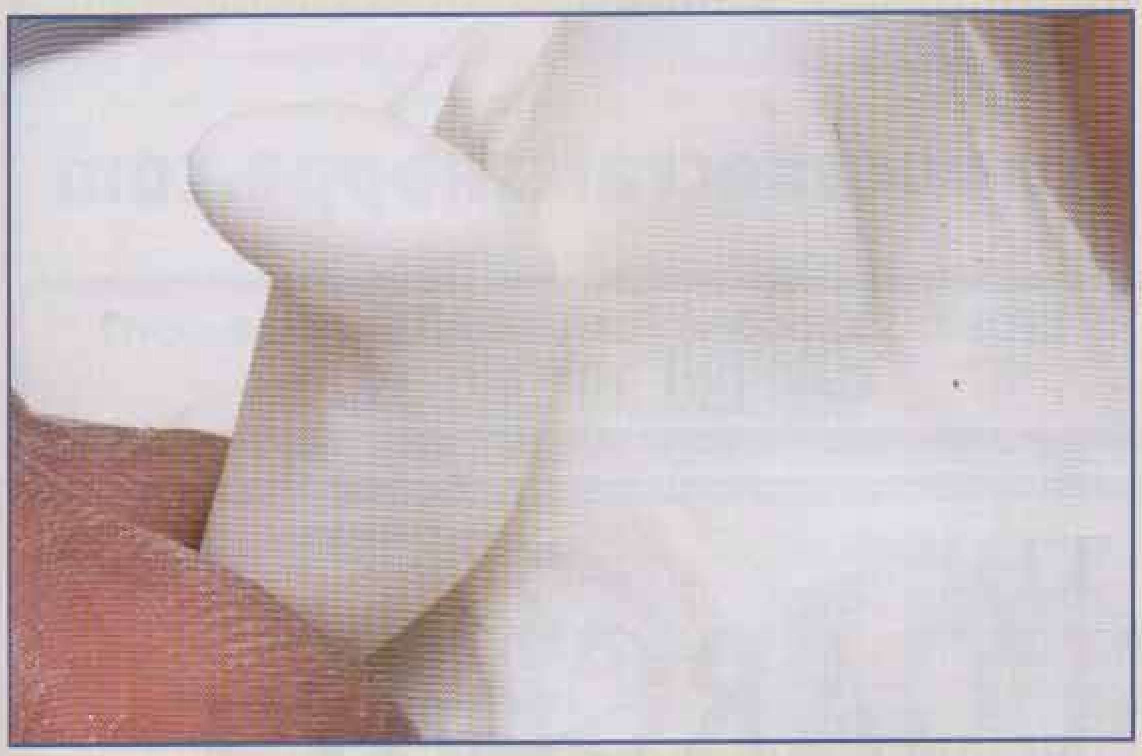
5 With 15g ($^1/_2$oz) of white sugarpaste roll a cone shape and put a slit in the fat end. Attach the arms to the snowmen so they are holding hands. Secure with water.



6 On the cake top fashion a rough cone shape out of 120g (4oz) of white sugarpaste and attach the final snowman's head to it. (This is the melting snowman).

9 Take run out consistency royal icing, half fill a ready made piping bag. Start piping from the neck of the snowman and all around the letters.

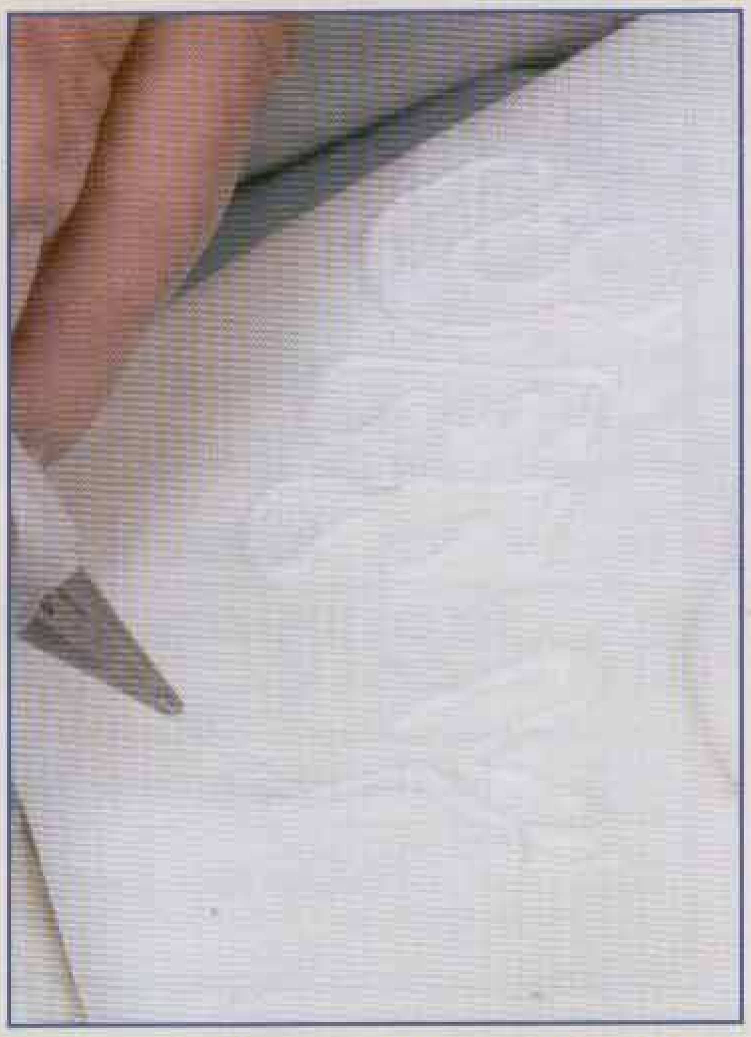




7 With 15g ($^{1}/_{2}$oz) of white sugarpaste mould two cone shapes and attach for the arms, shaping one to appear as if waving.

10 Stamp out the snowflakes with the smallest snowflake cutter and place them directly onto the cake board edge. Secure with water if necessary.

8 With a number 2 nozzle write the words "See You Next Year" in bubble writing.



11 Place a small amount of icing sugar into a sieve and sprinkle a small amount over the top of the cake to resemble a snowfall. Sprinkle with silver hologram to make the snow sparkle.

Last Minute Christmas Cheer

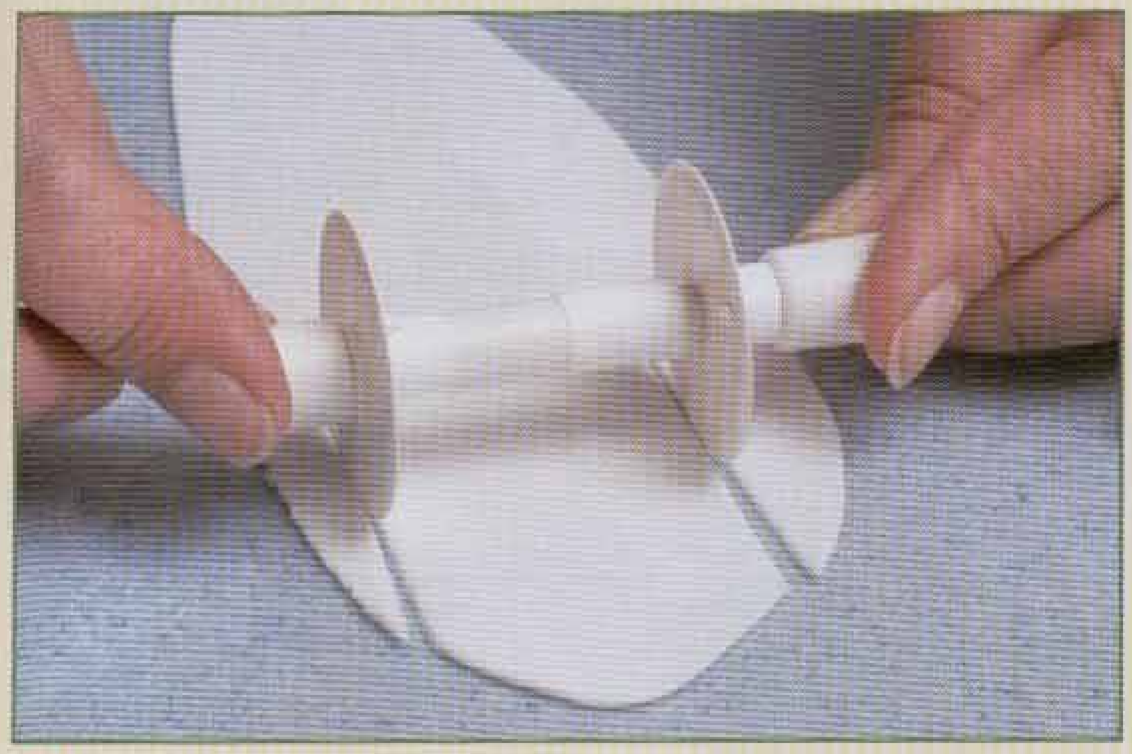
So you have finished everyone else's cakes and its Christmas Eve. Now its time to make your own, hope this idea helps, have fun.

Carol Haycox

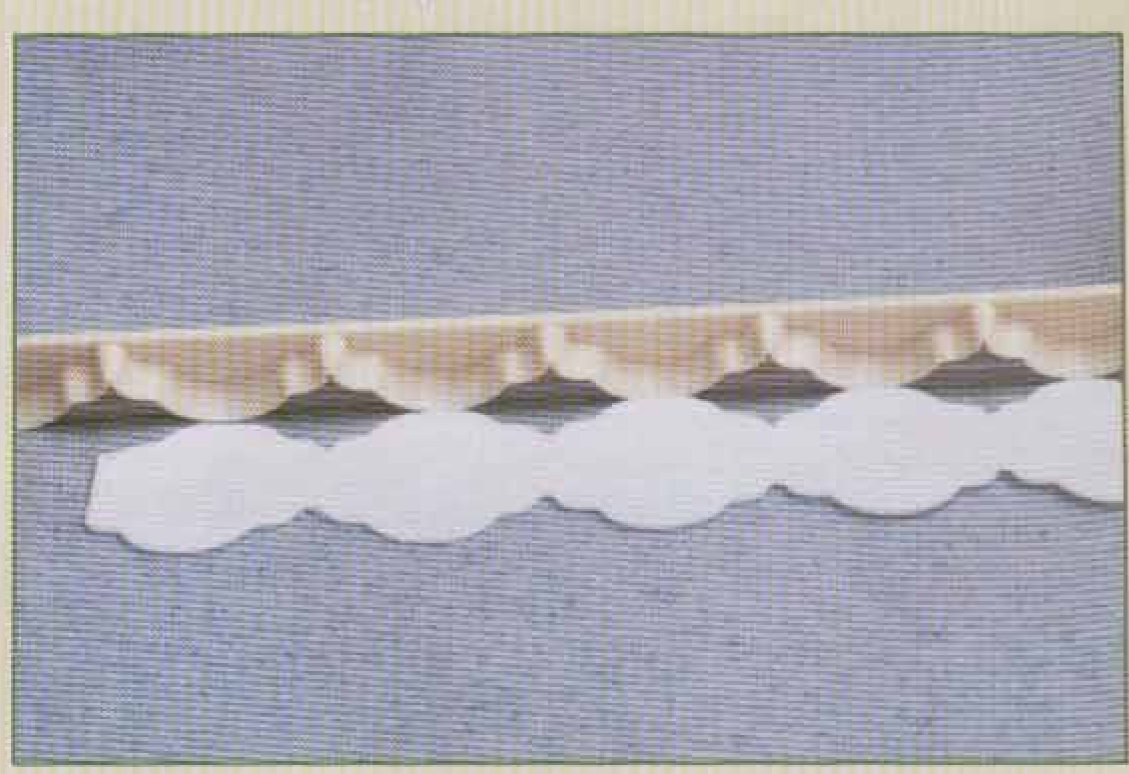
YOU WILL NEED

- fruit cake round 20cm (8in)
- almond paste 1k ($2^1/_2$lb)
- apricot glaze
- sugarpaste 2k ($4^1/_2$lb)
- board round 27cm (11in)
- cmc powder
- paintbrush 00
- dusting colours red, dark green and chestnut brown
- silver sparkle
- multi ribbon wheel *
- straight frill set 1-4 *
- christmas embossers *
- bead cutter 2 *
- upper and lower case script lettering *
- firm foam pad *

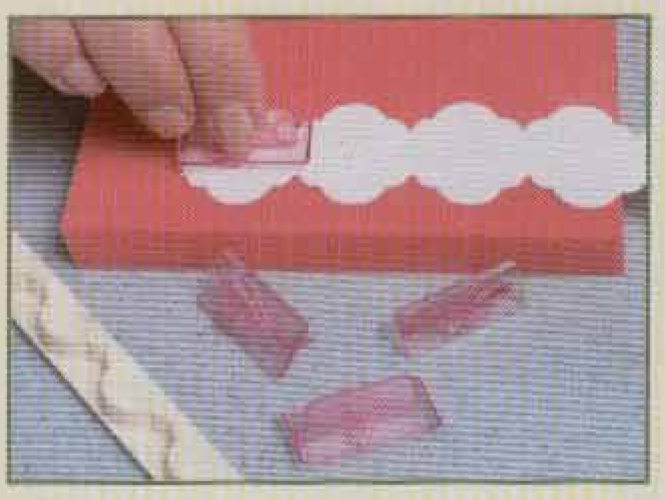
* FMM



1 Cover the cake and board with white sugarpaste. Add a teaspoon of CMC to 250g of sugarpaste. Roll a strip of paste and cut out with the multi ribbon wheel, set at $1^{3}/_{4}$in, move the paste to the board edge.

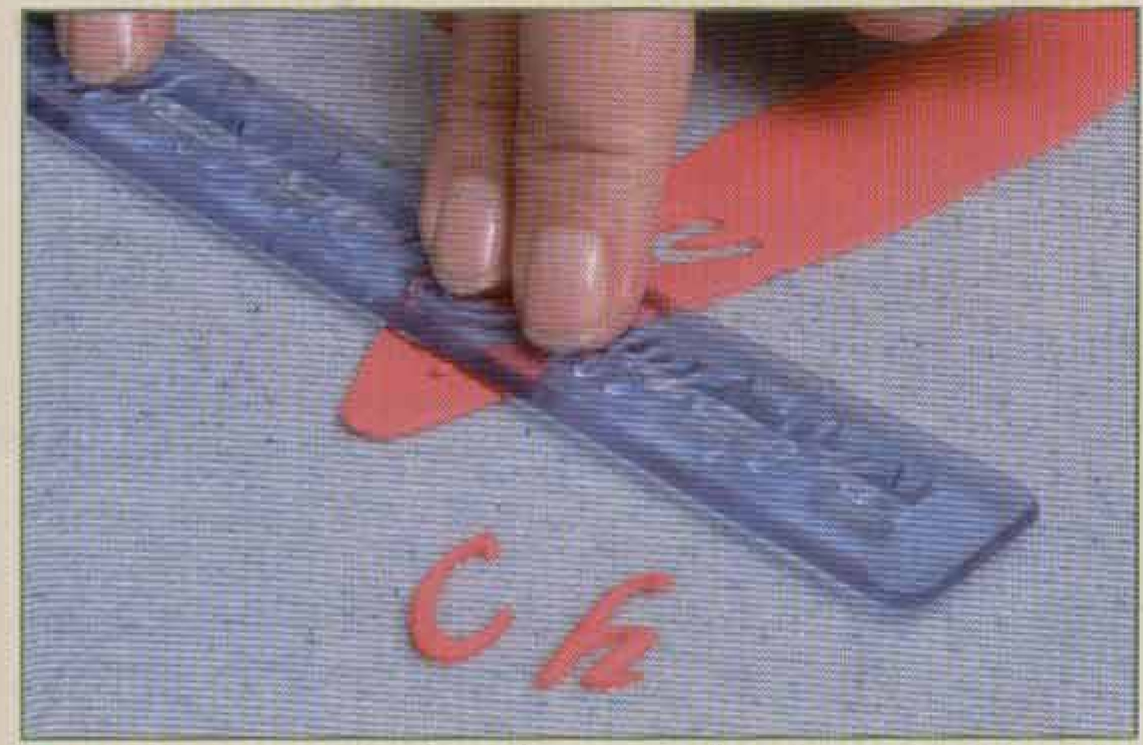


2 Place the strip cutter on the paste, spread your fingers along the top, push and cut. Turn the strip around and cut again-make sure the pattern lines up.



3 Place the strip onto your soft pad and emboss with the Christmas embossers. Use a large dusting brush and lustre dust to make the patterns shine. Attach to your cake with edible glue.

4 Colour some of the paste green and some red. Roll a sausage of green and place in cutter number 2. Press together and trim away the excess paste. Repeat this action until there is no more paste to cut away.



5 Make a piece for the cake top. Roll red paste finely and place the script lettering across the strip. Place your fingers on the cutter and move it back and forth, tap out the letter and stick in place on the cake.

6 Use a fine paintbrush to paint each one of the embossed pictures using dust colour and alcohol.

Christmas Specialities

It's good to have recipes which are special to this time of year using seasonal ingredients, giving a Christmas flavour to some delicious cakes and desserts.

Valerie Hedgethorne

Chestnut Meringue Gâteau

Fresh chestnuts become available now and feature in many seasonal recipes. However, to make life easier, this recipe uses a can of chestnut purée to fill the layers of meringue.

You will need three baking trays and non-stick baking paper or Bake-O-Glide. An electric hand whisk and a large piping bag and star tube.

The top of the cake can be dredged with cocoa before decorating.

INGREDIENTS

Meringue

4 egg whites - measuring 100ml (4fl oz)
225g (8oz) icing sugar
few drops lemon juice

Filling and decoration

300g (10oz) canned unsweetened chestnut purée
25g (1oz) caster sugar
300ml (10fl oz) double cream

METHOD

1 Cut the baking paper or Bake-O-Glide into two 20cm (8in) circles. Place on baking trays and line the third tray with the paper. Heat the oven to Gas 1/4 /130°C/225°F.

2 Make the meringue: Over a pan of hot water place a mixing bowl, put in the egg whites and sugar with the few drops of lemon juice. Whisk together until full peak.

3 Spoon about one-third into the piping bag and pipe eleven shell shapes on the lined baking tray.

4 Spread the remaining meringue on the two circles, keep the edges accurate and neat.

5 Bake for approximately 1 hour until crisp and dry, check the shells from time to time.

6 Carefully remove the rounds from the paper and transfer to a cooling rack.

7 **Filling**: beat the chestnut purée with the sugar until smooth without lumps, then spoon 2 - 3 tablespoonfuls into the cleaned piping bag. Pipe eight shells round the outside edge of one of the rounds.

8 Whip the cream to soft peak, fold it into all the remaining chestnut purée and use it to sandwich the rounds together. Place eight meringue shells between the chestnut ones, forming a border of alternate chestnut purée and meringue shells.

9 Put three meringue shells on top, using a little mixture to fasten them.

10 Keep in a cool place. It cuts well the day after it is made.

Moroccan Serpent Cake

This is the classic Moroccan recipe that is often served at Festival times. The filo pastry coiled in the form of a serpent is filled with almond paste and dusted with cinnamon.

You will need a baking tray and a clean tea towel.

This is nicest eaten warm, and any left over can be warmed again in the oven.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 sheets filo pastry
- 50g (2oz) butter - melted
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- icing sugar for dusting

Filling

- 50g (2oz) butter
- 200g (7oz) ground almonds
- 1/2 teaspoon almond essence
- 50g (2oz) icing sugar
- 1 egg yolk

METHOD

1 **Filling**; Mix the melted butter with the ground almonds and essence, add sugar and egg yolk and mix well until soft and pliable. Chill 10 minutes.

2 Heat the oven to Gas 4/180°C/350°F. Grease a baking tray.

3 Whilst working, keep unused filo pastry covered with a damp cloth to prevent it from drying out.

4 Melt the butter. Place two sheets of filo pastry on the work surface, overlapping to form an 18 x 56cm (7 x 22in) rectangle.

5 Brush the overlapping edges with the butter to secure, then brush all over. Cover with another 2 sheets of filo in the same way, brushing with butter. Take half the almond paste and roll into a sausage 50cm (20in) long. Place on the long side of the filo and roll up tightly, tuck in one end.

6 Repeat with the remaining sheets of filo and almond paste, making two long rolls. Shape one into a coil and place on the baking tray, with the closed end in the centre. Attach the second coil, join to the first, and continue coiling to make the complete serpent.

7 Beat the egg with half the cinnamon, brush over the coil and bake for approximately 30 minutes or until golden brown.

8 Transfer to a serving plate, dust with icing sugar and sprinkle on the remaining cinnamon.

9 Serve warm.

Chocolate & Cranberry Roulade

A chocolate roulade cannot fail to impress and delight your guests, especially this recipe with a Christmas twist. The addition of the seasonal cranberries in the filling not only gives a lovely colour but their tartness complements the cake's sweetness.

A few uncooked cranberries could be reserved to decorate the top with piped cream

You will need a swiss roll tin measuring 33 x 23cm (13 x 9in), and non-stick baking paper.

INGREDIENTS

6 eggs
150g (5oz) caster sugar
50g (2oz) cocoa powder

Filling

200g (7oz) cranberries
50g (2oz) caster sugar
300ml (10fl oz) double or whipping cream
extra cocoa for dusting

METHOD

1 Line the tin with the non-stick paper. This should be done all in one piece with the paper extending well above the sides.

2 Cook the cranberries with the sugar and a couple of tablespoons of water. Allow to cool.

3 Heat the oven to Gas 4/180°C/350°F.

4 Separate the eggs. In a bowl over a pan of hot water whisk together the egg yolks and sugar until thick. Remove from the heat. Sieve the cocoa and fold in very carefully to avoid expelling the air.

5 With the cleaned whisk, whisk the egg whites until stiff and fold into the egg mixture with a large metal spoon. Turn into the tin and gently level the surface.

6 Bake for 20 - 30 minutes until firm to the touch. Leave to cool in the tin then turn out onto a large piece of greaseproof paper dusted with icing sugar.

7 Whip the cream to soft peak. Spread the cooled cranberries over the cake, then most of the cream, leave a border of 2.5cm (1in). Roll up from the short end without pressing, finish with the end underneath.

8 Don't worry if it cracks, this often happens. Dust generously with cocoa.

9 Pipe cream down the centre and decorate.

Gingerbread House Biscuits

Here's a new idea instead of gingerbread men. Children will love these and can help decorate them with different colours. They would be especially good for Christmas fairs.

You will need a house cutter (available from Lakeland Ltd). 2 baking trays, small greaseproof icing bags and small piping tubes - 1.5 and 2 are best.

INGREDIENTS

350g (12oz) plain flour
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
2 teaspoons ground ginger
$^{1}/_{2}$ teaspoon mixed spice
110g (4oz) margarine
175g (6oz) light soft brown sugar
4 tablespoons golden syrup
1 egg

Decoration

175g (6oz) icing sugar
egg white to mix } **or Tate &Lyle royal icing sugar**
food colourings

METHOD

1 Heat the oven to Gas 5/190°C/375°F. Grease the baking trays.

2 Sieve together the flour, bicarbonate of soda and spices into a bowl. Rub in the margarine and stir in the sugar. Add the beaten egg and the syrup - heat the spoon before measuring the syrup.

3 Mix to form a smooth dough and knead very lightly on a floured surface.

4 Divide in two, roll out one half to a thickness of 5mm ($^{1}/_{4}$in). Cut out the houses, pressing to emboss the design of the house. Place on the baking trays and bake for 7 minutes, then take them out of the oven and press the cutter accurately on the biscuits to re-mark the lines. Bake for a further 3 - 4 minutes or until a light brown.

5 Leave for a few minutes on the trays then remove carefully onto a cooling rack. Repeat with the second half of the dough.

6 Make the royal icing, colour as desired and use to pipe in the lines, varying the patterns and colours to give a variety of houses.

Not all the lines have to be piped in, you can use your own imagination to get a variety of houses.

Seasonal Ingredients

Valerie Hedgethorne

These ingredients are used in the Home Baking pages and are an important part of the Christmas season, here are a few facts about them.

ALMONDS

Although almonds are used throughout the year they play a special part in sweet baking and confectionery especially for those important occasions.

In some countries, sugared almonds are given to guests at weddings and Christenings, and in this country we have them as sweetmeats alongside petits fours.

They come from the kernel of a fruit closely related to the apricot, which is why we often include them in dishes including apricots, and sometimes add them to home-made apricot jam.

There are two main classes of almonds - bitter and sweet.

Bitter

These are seldom used in cooking, they taste extremely bitter, but sometimes a small proportion is added to almond paste. They must, however, be used very sparingly because they contain prussic acid which is lethal.

Sweet

There are many different varieties, some of which will only grow in specific countries.

Jordan - the name has nothing to do with the country of that name. It is probably a corruption of the French word *jardin* signifying that they were cultivated and not wild. They are mainly grown in Malaga and Alicante, they are long and slender and the small ones go to the confectioners who make sugared almonds.

Californian - as the name suggests, these are from California and are a comparatively new type.

Valencia - grown in Spain and Portugal. These are flatter ones with a rougher skin and less sweet flavour. Sold mainly for cooking, they are usually blanched and skinned and widely used for decoration of cakes etc.

PREPARED ALMONDS

Whole unblanched or blanched. Buy whole almonds and blanch them yourself, especially if you intend to chop them, as the job becomes much easier. To blanch: put them in a bowl, cover them with boiling water and leave until the skins wrinkle and loosen. Dry before use.

Halved blanched - these are useful for decoration.

Flaked - very good for use in both sweet and savoury dishes and are useful to have in the store cupboard.

Chopped - sometimes called nibbed - make certain that they are 100% almonds, cheap ones may contain other types of nuts e.g. peanuts.

Ground - there are various qualities of these, some are coarser and darker than others, but it depends what you intend to use them for. They are used extensively, not only to make marzipan but also in cakes to supply a firmer and a moister texture. There are some pastry goods, which rely on them completely, such as Bakewell tart. Almond paste is used not only for covering cakes but also as a filling in yeast dishes and pastries, especially at Easter and Christmas.

CHESTNUTS

Of all the nuts, chestnuts are the ones which are a speciality at this time of year, and seem to conjure up pictures of them roasting on an open fire, (they don't do so well just standing in front of a radiator)! Dorothy Hartley tells the story in her book 'Food in England' that chestnuts would be set along the top bar of the hot grate with a name of a young man given to each. The first name to pop would be the first lover to pop the question.

The chestnut season starts from September onwards, depending upon the locality.

There are several varieties, which mainly differ by having one or more nuts inside the shell. Only when there is a single nut can it be called a marron, and when preserved in syrup they are called marrons glaces, an expensive luxury. They come from France and are only obtainable at the Christmas season.

Chestnuts have been known since the times of ancient Greece and used in many ways. Nowadays nearly all are imported from Italy and France and are available in the late autumn.

Peeling them is not always easy. If you want to prepare them yourself, the simplest way is to pierce the flat ends, put them into boiling water for 5 minutes, and when cool enough to handle the shell and skin can be removed. However, for most recipes, the canned or dried kind are adequate and are good additions to savoury dishes, either chopped for stuffings or popularly mixed with Brussels sprouts for the Christmas dinner. Chestnut flour is also available, but my favourite is the canned chestnut purée, which makes heavenly desserts especially when partnered with cream, chocolate, or meringue.

CINNAMON

Spices really come into their own at Christmas, in the pudding, the mince pies and the cakes as well as other recipes.

Cinnamon is one of the most important spices and probably the most popular. Cinnamon and cassia are related, but cassia is more pungent, and only cinnamon is sold in this country. It is the inner bark of a fragrant type of laurel, which is stripped off and flattened before rolling into quills. These quills or sticks are used for flavouring syrups and liquid dishes. We mostly use it ground, but don't buy it in large quantities because it quickly loses its aroma. It contains antiseptic oils, which help to preserve food, and has health giving properties.

Although we like its lovely flavour in cakes it is found in savoury recipes, particularly those from North Africa.

It goes particularly well with apples and other fruits. Try it sprinkled on yoghurt, served on top of peaches but particularly enjoy it in your Christmas baking.